

PlayStation2 | GameCube | Xbox | PC | GBA | PSP | DS | Arcade | Retro

BUNGIE DELIVERS THE REAL HALO BEATER

PREVIEWED

TIMESPLITTERS 3 [PS2/XB/GC] **EVIL GENIUS** [PC] **GTA: SAN ANDREAS** [PS2] **BROTHERS IN ARMS** [PS2/XB/PC] **SNIPER ELITE** [PS2/XB/PC] **DAWN OF WAR** [PC] **FINAL FANTASY XII** [PS2]


eMag

Recent events have seen videogames dragged through the mud by the nation's press. Sifting through the many reports – all tailored to sensationalise the tragic death of Stefan Pakeerah – it was hard not to be depressed by what was being presented as fact.

That videogames have again been accused of being a bad influence should come as no surprise – most forms of entertainment have faced similar criticism in the past, so perhaps this is a sign that games have filtered into public consciousness and will, through greater understanding, become more accepted.

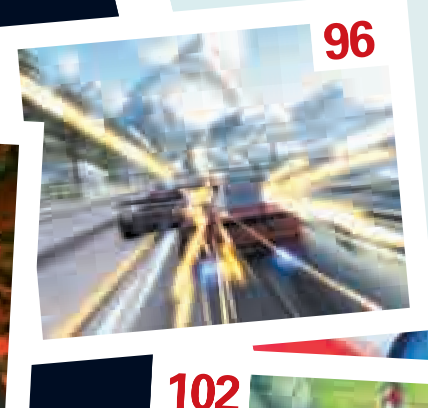
Aside from the tragic loss of life, the real sadness is the underlying suspicion that newspapers, ever quick to generate hysteria, will always present games as a threat to society. The danger, however, is that videogames publishers will do nothing to counter these attacks. And with *Manhunt*'s sales soaring in the wake of controversy, it's hard to see that happening soon.

Simon Phillips,
Group Editor


This Month
AIR
High Score 00080



In gamesTM
0 Score 000023





CONTENTS

PREVIEWS

REVIEWS

FEATURES

REGULARS

RETRO


Final Fantasy XII
46 The saga continues – but will the changes made by Square Enix finally create the ultimate adventure?

NEWS

NEWS | **INDUSTRY GOSSIP** | OPINION



CONTENTS

FIND OUT WHERE TO GET THE ESSENTIAL STORIES WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NEWS

GAMES UNDER ATTACK

MAINSTREAM MEDIA IRRESPONSIBILITY AS MANHUNT BLAMED FOR TEENAGER'S MURDER

“ON THE DAY THE STORY BROKE, **MANHUNT LEAPT OVER 70 PLACES** UP THE AMAZON SALES CHART “

■ Many papers looked at other violent games though we doubt the reporters have actually played them…

By the time you read this, the furore surrounding *Manhunt* and the murder of a 14-year-old schoolboy will have died down. Yet the issues raised by the tabloid frenzy are far wider-reaching, encompassing scapegoating, inaccurate reporting and censorship.

On 29 July, the *Daily Mail* and the *Mirror* accused Rockstar’s ultra-violent *Manhunt* of prompting 17-year-old Warren LeBlanc to kill Stefan Pakeerah with a claw hammer and knife. Pakeerah’s mother, Giselle, called for violent games like *Manhunt* to be banned. Despite later admitting his motive for the attack was to rob Pakeerah in order to settle drug debts, LeBlanc’s ‘obsession’ with the PS2 game was used as the hook for the *Mail* and *Mirror*’s lead stories. “Horror images on computer drove teenager to kill his friend aged 14,” claimed the *Daily Mail*.

Nearly all the British newspapers covered the story, while television and radio coverage was out in force, with most major stations providing regular updates on the story.

The next day, the killing of Stefan Pakeerah took a back seat to a more direct attack on videogames. After successfully being used to create a mass outcry against videogames, the crime was brushed aside, with newspapers printing news pieces solely designed to name and shame the most violent games available and test store staff on selling age-restricted games to children.

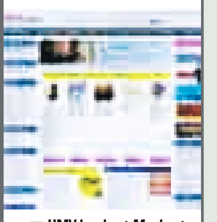
Days later, Leicestershire Police told game industry trade magazine *MCV* that the copy of *Manhunt* central to the media storm was found in Pakeerah’s bedroom, not LeBlanc’s. Despite this hiccup, US lawyer Jack Thompson, well known for his aggressive anti-gaming stance and now representing Giselle Pakeerah who is suing Rockstar, insisted in an interview with IGN.com that “The reports that the game belonged to the victim are false. The game belonged to the murderer… he left it at the house of the victim.”

The combination of media outcry and journalists sending children into shops to attempt to buy 18-rated games prompted some retailers to remove the game from the shelves, the first being high-street electronics chain Dixons. Hamish Thompson, head of group media relations at Dixons, told us: “We felt that it was appropriate to withdraw the game from sale having carefully weighed up the huge volume of feedback that we had received from customers.” The UK’s largest game retailer, Game, followed suit by removing *Manhunt* from all 390 of its stores. Lisa Artemis, PR executive at Game, said: “*Manhunt* is not available in Game stores, out of sympathy to the family.”

Since the media outcry and subsequent removal of the game from the shelves of Dixons, Game and Woolworths, *Manhunt* has sold out in many of the stores still selling it, sending the game back up the charts – on the day the story broke, it leapt over 70 places up the Amazon chart. Ironically, the newspapers so eager to rid the world of such violent titles have helped popularise a game they apparently want to ban.



■ Roger Bennett has been defending the industry.



■ HMV has kept *Manhunt* on sale despite the outcry.


Daily Mail
WHAT A FARCE
BAN THESE EVIL GAMES

■ Irresponsible reports are unhelpful and pointless.

UNDER FIRE

INDUSTRY FIGURES DISCUSS MEDIA METHODS AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

ELSPA SAYS NO!

On the frontline of the battle against the media attacks was the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers’ Association and its director general, Roger Bennett. Since the story broke, Bennett has refuted suggestions that *Manhunt* was responsible for the death of Stefan Pakeerah. Bennett also sent an open letter to home secretary David Blunkett, setting the record straight regarding “misleading” media coverage. In his letter, Bennett criticised MP Keith Vaz who linked *Manhunt* with Stefan Pakeerah’s murder. “It was unfortunate Mr Vaz should speak out so irrationally against the companies concerned,” Bennett wrote. “[Leicestershire Police] do not and have not ever linked this brutal crime with any videogame.” In an interview with trade magazine *MCV*, Bennett also criticised retailers for giving into media pressure, saying: “There was no reason to pull the game from the shelves; it is perfectly legal for them to sell it. Them doing this simply fuelled the media and to some extent pulled the rug out from under us after all the work we’d done.”

RETAIL GROUP HUG

Also condemning Dixons and Game were the rest of the retail community who continued to sell *Manhunt* despite stiff pressure to follow suit and take the game off their shelves. Dixons and Game are being accused of putting out a message that retailers can be easily controlled in times like this and should take responsibility for products already deemed acceptable for public use by the BBFC. Some also predict newspapers will see *Manhunt*’s removal as a sign of weakness or admission of guilt. HMV is one such retailer, preferring to sell games rather than play censor. “It’s the BBFC’s job to certificate the games and govern who the content is suitable for,” said HMV spokesperson Gennaro Castaldo. “Retailers should remain neutral and simply enforce the certificate system. If you ban the game, all you do is increase its appeal among the very people you are trying to dissuade from playing it.”

OUR TWO CENTS

The first thing to point out are the irresponsible and immoral reporting methods of certain sections of the media. The story is of a boy who was killed by a friend who wished to rob him, yet it seems the media used Stefan Pakeerah’s murder as a stepping stone towards a previously planned attack on videogames. From a gameplay point of view, we don’t like *Manhunt* – it’s pointlessly unpleasant with little substance – but in terms of our freedom to choose, we find it disappointing that retailers such as Game and Dixons felt it necessary to withdraw it. The only valid issue raised in the wake of this incident is the problem of how easy it is for children to acquire violent games, yet despite belt-tightening by store staff, we doubt it’ll be long before they loosen up again.

Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



THE PRICE IS RIGHT

It looks like the Christmas hardware war has started early, with both Sony and Microsoft slashing console prices. Microsoft stole some of Sony's thunder at the Leipzig Games Convention by revealing the Xbox's new £99.99 price ahead of the PS2 price of £104.99. However, Nintendo has insisted it will not follow suit in the near future. "We have no plans to reduce the price of GameCube in Europe," said Nintendo UK's PR manager Robert Saunders. "It's already at a great price and we have a very strong software line-up for the rest of the year."

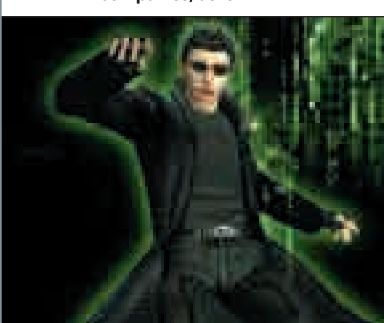






WARNER RIDES THE MONOLITH

With anticipation for *The Matrix Online* building, Warner Bros Interactive Entertainment has bought the game's developer, Monolith. The newly-formed gaming arm of WB already owned a 20 per cent stake in the studio, bought last year. Despite the purchase, though, WB will not disrupt the developer's work. "Things will actually change very little," said Samantha Ryan, Monolith's chief executive. "We're free to continue to work with other companies, as is WBIE."







EA HEADS TOWARDS WORLD DOMINATION

EA insists that the Criterion buyout is good for the industry.

EA has the licence and film tie-in markets sewn up.

SHOP TILL YOU DROP

With its recent purchase of acclaimed developer Criterion, the already huge publisher Electronic Arts is swiftly becoming the most powerful player within the games industry.

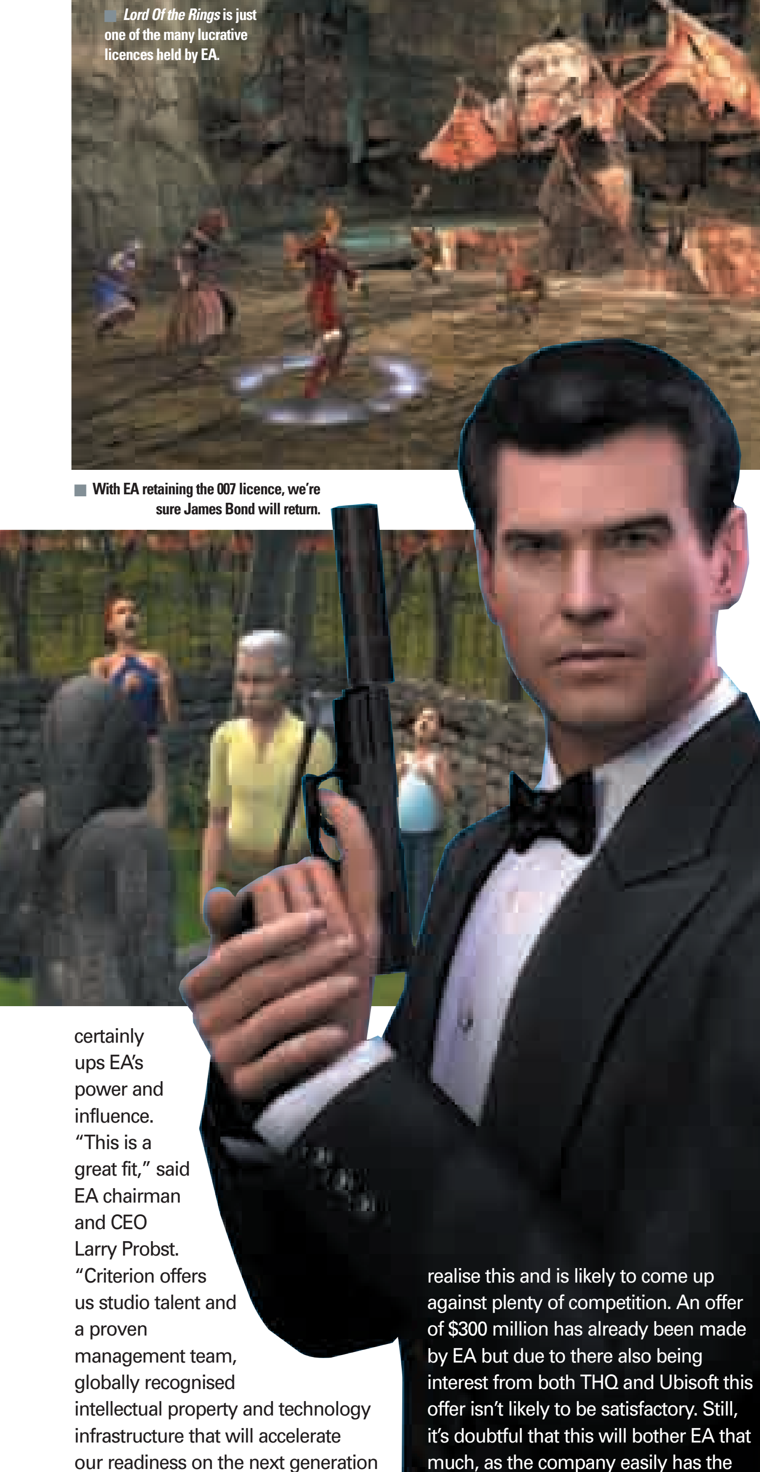
On the face of it, the fact that a large publisher has seized control of a smaller developer isn't something that deserves a huge amount of attention. It's happening all the time – a publisher takes a shine to a particular series of games, sticks its hand in its wallet and buys the company. An independent studio becomes part of a bigger picture, and everyone kicks back and reaps the benefits. It's an ongoing process of consolidation and growth within the industry.

Though this usually routine occurrence is easily accepted and more or less ignored by most, when the buyer is industry giant Electronic Arts and it's targeting and consuming some of the most respected and powerful development teams in the world, it's much bigger news. This is exactly what's taking place at the moment and EA seems to be in the process of global domination as far as the games industry is concerned.

> "WITHIN EA WE CAN NOW SECURE OUR FUTURE AS ONE OF THE LEADING DEVELOPMENT STUDIOS"
>
> FIONA SPERRY, HEAD OF CRITERION

Criterion, as one of the leading developers in the UK and the company responsible for the superb *Burnout 3*, was a wise purchase for EA, and Criterion seems more than happy. "Our mission has always been to create exciting new franchises that appeal to the widest possible audience," said Fiona Sperry, head of Criterion. "Within EA we can now secure our future as one of the leading development studios."

EA has secured a lot more than a couple of new titles for its cash, though. As a nice bonus, the softco has also gained Criterion-created middleware RenderWare, which effectively puts EA in control of the technology that's used by the majority of its rivals. Exactly how this is going to affect these competitors is unknown, but it's bound to create a bit of a stir in the industry and



Lord Of the Rings is just one of the many lucrative licences held by EA.

With EA retaining the 007 licence, we're sure James Bond will return.

certainly ups EA's power and influence. "This is a great fit," said EA chairman and CEO Larry Probst. "Criterion offers us studio talent and a proven management team, globally recognised intellectual property and technology infrastructure that will accelerate our readiness on the next generation of consoles."

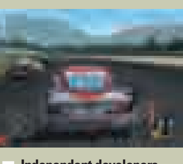
Not content with seizing control of Criterion and RenderWare, around the time of the Criterion buyout EA was also keeping a close eye on its next prey, the UK's biggest publisher, Eidos. With titles such as *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and the *Hitman* series tucked under its belt, Eidos would be a gem of a buy, but EA isn't the only company to realise this and is likely to come up against plenty of competition. An offer of $300 million has already been made by EA but due to there also being interest from both THQ and Ubisoft this offer isn't likely to be satisfactory. Still, it's doubtful that this will bother EA that much, as the company easily has the funds to outbid any other offers if it so wishes and we'd be surprised if EA doesn't end up with the prize.

If you consider the Criterion buyout along with previous deals which have secured EA the Bond licence for the next ten years and snatched *Burnout 3* from the hands of Acclaim, you have to wonder exactly where EA is headed and where – or, indeed, if – this shopping spree is going to stop.

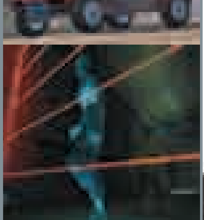


THE END FOR THE INDIES?

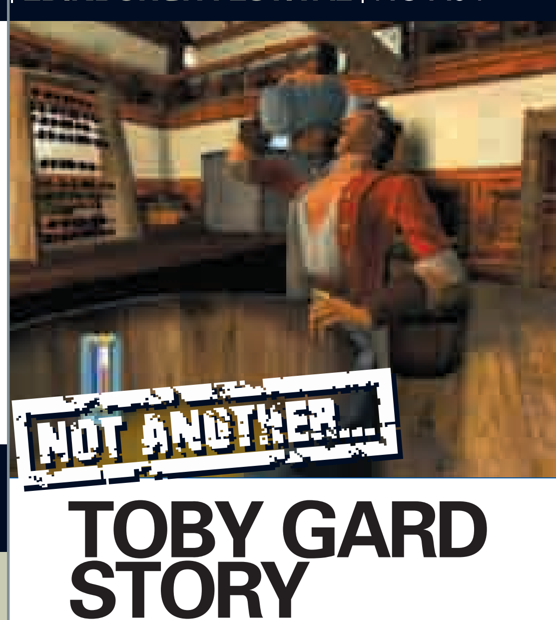
With the bidding war for Eidos well and truly underway, it seems we could soon be seeing the end of the independent British developer. With the exception of Codemasters, Free Radical, Climax and Bizarre Creations, nearly every other studio has either slowly faded away or been snapped up by a larger international company. With the rumours that Codemasters was about to go under the hammer now dispelled, it stands alone, the last independent British company that both develops and publishes. It can only be a matter of time before the entire industry is run by superpowers. It's almost enough to bring a tear to your eye.



Independent developers are becoming a rare breed.



A few UK-based studios are keeping the flag flying.



NOT ANOTHER...

TOBY GARD STORY

EX-BUCCANEER RETURNS FOR SOME CROFT ORIGINAL

Despite the resounding disappointment of *Galleon* still ringing in our ears, the news that Toby Gard has moved into a lead role within US developer Crystal Dynamics should at least bring smiles to the faces of gamers everywhere. Gard, the man responsible for bringing the character of Lara Croft into the world, will now work as a senior designer on the team creating the latest version of the *Tomb Raider* franchise – the same franchise that was stripped from Core Design after the last game, *Angel Of Darkness*, failed to live up to gamers' and critics' expectations.

"Toby will complement the existing talented team creating the next *Tomb Raider* title," an Eidos spokesman said after the announcement. "As the creator of the Lara Croft character, he brings a unique perspective to the development process." Not surprisingly, Gard's departure from Confounding Factor (the developer behind *Galleon*) has only served to increase speculation that the studio will close in the near future, following *Galleon*'s lacklustre performance at retail. Hopefully, though, Gard's influence will help to bolster the changes that Crystal Dynamics – predominantly known for the *Legacy Of Kain* series – is making to bring Lara Croft back to her past form.





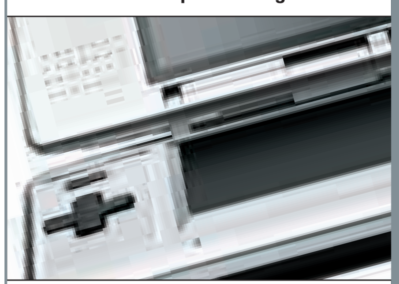
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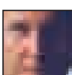
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

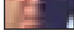


IT STANDS FOR 'DUE SOON'

Despite no confirmation from Nintendo itself, reports from the US suggest that the company's new handheld, the Nintendo DS, is still on target for launch before the end of this year in Japan and America. According to unofficial sources, the handheld is due to land on Japanese shelves on 4 November at an estimated ¥19,000, followed by the US launch on 11 November at $179.95. The lack of any denial from Nintendo could mean the rumours are true, although publishers are still worried about a lack of details regarding the line-up of launch games.

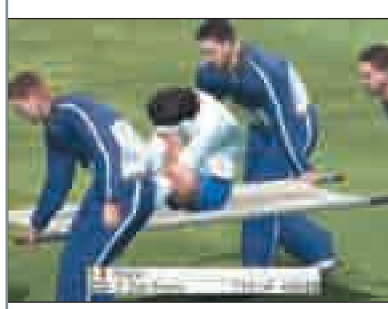


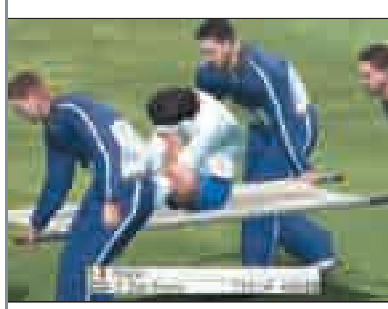




BACK OF THE NET

FIFA and *Pro Evolution Soccer* might go toe to toe every year in Europe, but the Japanese know which side their bread is buttered when it comes to football games. You need only look at the August release of *Winning Eleven 8* for proof – while Konami anticipated sales of 1.5 million units throughout the game's lifespan, it sold around half that on the first day of release. Considering *Winning Eleven 7*, took three weeks to reach the magic million, it's a massive achievement – we can only hope the same happens when it comes out over here at the end of October.





TIGA and ELSPA were both pleased with this year's high turnout.

The many thought-provoking and entertaining conferences stole the show.

A BONNY TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

THIS YEAR'S EIGF PROVES IT'S SCOT THE LOT

With the memories of recent games events faded, last month's Edinburgh International Games Festival came along just in time to remind us why we love the games industry. The Edingburgh International Games Festival, which is run by trade associations ELSPA and the Independent Games Developers' Association (TIGA), was the best yet with the introduction of game screenings at a local cinema and a greater host of debates and guest speakers.

As popular as the Go Play Games exhibition (that showcased a number of new titles) and the game screenings were, it was the diverse range of conferences that stole the show. With football commentator Clive Tyldesley as MC and speakers such as EA's Neil Young and Eidos creative director Ian Livingstone, the events attracted scores of spectators and participants.

"I think the festival has gone pretty well," said Fred Hasson, CEO of TIGA. "The Go Play Games exhibition has been reasonably full every day and there have been instances where people have just not been able to get in. The level of interest in games and the creators of games was very encouraging. If we can get word out that these things happen among the gaming community we think we'll fill the halls next year."

It wasn't all piracy and next-generation debates, though. Former *GamesMaster* frontman Dominik Diamond hosted 'Pitch Idol' where industry lawyers and journalists pitched their games ideas to a panel of judges and quickly showed exactly why they represent and review rather than produce the games we play.

Reflecting on the event, TIGA and ELSPA are pleased with what they achieved. "We have hit the cultural mark that we were aiming for," said Hasson. "This was never meant to be just another industry gathering. This is about where videogames come of age and say 'we're as valid as the book festival, the comedy festival and the film festival', and it's clear from the media interest that a lot of people are now realising that games have a place among these other cultural activities."

> "THIS WAS **NEVER MEANT TO BE** JUST ANOTHER INDUSTRY GATHERING"

CANCELLATION OF X04 SUGGESTS 2005 EVENT APPEARANCE FOR XBOX 2

X0 IS A NO SHOW

Bad news for industry liggers looking for a free holiday – Microsoft has confirmed that there will be no European Xbox conference in 2004. The X0 events, usually held in luxurious locations, have been used to showcase new Xbox titles and make major announcements, such as the company's buyout of Rare. However, the US giant will not host a similar conference this year, planning instead to hold events for each of its key titles in individual countries. Games such as *Halo 2*, *Forza Motorsport* and *Jade Empire* will receive special treatment across Europe, with events due to begin later in the year and continue into 2005. Microsoft's belief that each game deserves to be shown in its own light, combined with the disappointing reaction to last year's X03, is likely to be the main reason for the decision.

The cancellation of an all-encompassing event in Europe has led to speculation that Microsoft has its sights on next January's Consumer Electronics Show for the unveiling of Xbox 2, currently codenamed Xenon. With Bill Gates showing the original Xbox at the CES in 2001, it makes sense for the machine's successor to appear at the same event. While Microsoft has refused to comment, industry insiders are convinced that it is where the company will move into the next generation of hardware.



Sorry, freeloaders – no X0 for you this year.

games™ THE TOP FIVE

SPORTING HEROES IN GAME FORM

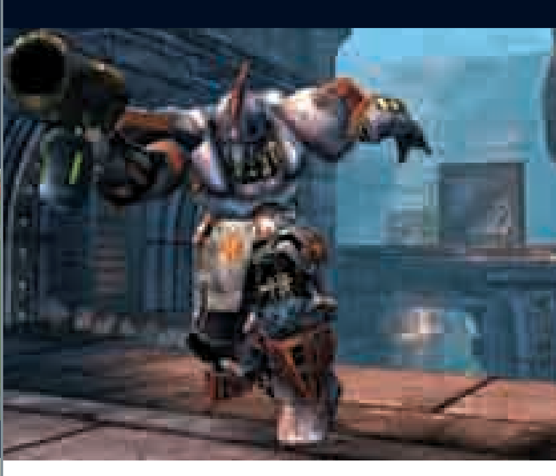
No.5 BRIAN LARA
Scores a century every time

No.4 MIKE TYSON
He's a lover, not a fighter

No.3 SHAQUILLE O'NEAL
And not a slam dunk in sight

No.2 DALEY THOMPSON
You've got to love that moustache

No.1 GEOFF CAPES
The man we all wished we were



SO REAL IT'S UNREAL

MIDWAY SNATCHES PUBLISHING RIGHTS TO EPIC'S FPS FRANCHISE

Epic Games has ended its long-running relationship with Atari and chosen Midway Games as its stablemate for the next round of *Unreal* releases. According to the agreement between the two companies, Midway now owns worldwide publishing rights for the next three games in the *Unreal* series, believed to be *Unreal Championship 2* for the Xbox (due out early next year) and two more outings for *Unreal Tournament* on the PC. "Midway… hits right at the heart of gamers," said Mark Rein, vice president and co-founder of Epic Games. "Not only did it create many classics… but it's making great new games too. It makes awesome games and doesn't apologise for it, so we think games like *Unreal Tournament* will fit in perfectly here."

Although Midway may seem an unlikely choice, the announcement comes at a time when the publisher has a strong line-up of titles due for the end of 2004, such as the surprisingly impressive *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* and the next *Mortal Kombat* game, *Deception*. With this deal securing the company's entry into the triple-A title PC market, Midway's fortunes could be on the up.

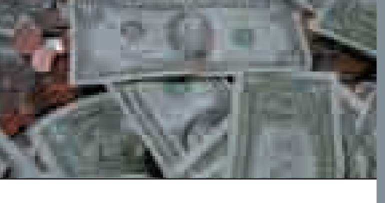
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BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



THE CHIPS ARE DOWN

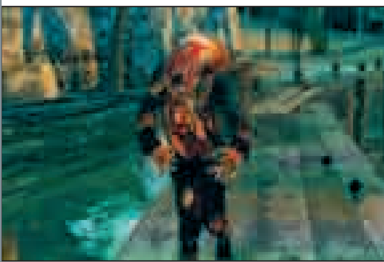
The latest range of Geforce 6 graphics cards might be the next big thing for PCs, but latest figures from Nvidia show that the graphics chip manufacturer is having a tough time of it. Revenue and profits have plummeted in the second quarter of the company's financial year, with sales down $50 million and profit down to only $5.1 million. Nvidia president and chief executive Jen-Hsun Huang attributed the decline to "several unusual market events" including a recall of its products by Intel and numerous price cuts.





YES, THE BUTLER DID IT

Will Valve ever plug the leaks? It doesn't look likely, as reports claim the entire script for *Half-Life 2* was accidentally included within the Steam release of the *Counter-Strike: Source* download. While not as serious as the previous code leak that caused *Half-Life 2*'s delay, the incident has left obsessed fans trawling the net in search of the escaped text. Of course, with *Doom 3* currently hogging the limelight, cynics have suggested that the leak may have been deliberate to lure attention back towards *Half-Life 2*. But Valve wouldn't make itself look incompetent to get some publicity… would it?









We just hope people use those two screens wisely…

TWO SCREENS GOOD



RARE LOYAL TO MICROSOFT AS DS DEVELOPERS NAMED

After giving us a glimpse of the final design for its twin-screened handheld, Nintendo has announced that there are over 120 DS games in development. Studios such as THQ, Activision, Sega, Konami, EA, Capcom and Square Enix have all pledged support for the system although the proposed titles are hardly in keeping with Nintendo's ideal of a new way of playing games. As important as the likes of high-profile franchises such as *Viewtiful Joe*, *Pro Evolution Soccer* and *Final Fantasy* will be, the prospect of playing them with a second screen (most likely showing us things that need only be a pause menu away) or stylus control hasn't got us excited yet.

What's more interesting is the ever-growing array of titles that do exploit the "completely new ways to play" mentioned by Nintendo's Reggie Fils-Aime. Yet while games like *Pac-Pix* and *Wario Ware* are conceptually sound, turning these ideas into fully fledged games is another matter. Still, developers remain keen to show their support. "From the first time we saw the abilities of the Nintendo DS, we knew we had something extraordinary in our hands," said Activision VP of global brand marketing Will Kassoy. "Our developers dove right in and made the most of the unique features of this revolutionary new system."

But for those of you hoping for DS versions of *Perfect Dark* or *Blast Corp*, Microsoft has made it perfectly clear that the chances of any Rare remakes are between slim and none. "Microsoft and its studios are focusing all efforts on developing quality games for the Windows and Xbox platforms," the firm said when questioned, but a cheeky Rare employee was eager to wind up fans in a recent Q&A session. He responded to a question about DS ports of N64 titles by saying, "Sounds cool, but we're not doing any DS games, are we? Or… are we?"

Suffice to say, Microsoft continues to insist that "At this time, there are no plans to support the DS." But the prospect of Rare courting Nintendo again will undoubtedly continue to be a nagging hope at the back of many gamers' minds.

PLAYSTATION EXPERIENCE VISITS ALTON TOWERS

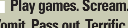
SONY HEADS TO OBLIVION

After two years' sharing exhibition space with trade show ECTS, Sony has decided to host this year's week-long PlayStation Experience event at Alton Towers. The show, starting on 16 September, will let gamers try out forthcoming PlayStation2 titles and win prizes in a lively theme park environment. The event will also be filmed for a 90-minute TV show.

Mike Lorimer, marketing manager for Alton Towers, said: "We are very excited to be hosting this event. Not only will it showcase our fantastic rides and attractions to a key audience on TV, but it will also allow every one of our guests access to some fabulous added experiences in the Sony PlayStation areas."

The event's climax will come on 23 September, when special guests and competition winners get special VIP access to Alton Towers, giving them priority access to rides such as Air, Nemesis and Oblivion. Guests will also be treated to live performances by as-yet unannounced artists and a special after-show party.

Ticket details were unavailable at the time of going to press, but visit www.playstation.co.uk for further information (unless you didn't buy this mag until after the event, of course, in which case you'll just have to watch the televised show).



Play games. Scream. Vomit. Pass out. Terrific.



PLAY MISTY FOR ME

ROLE-PLAYING LEGEND TO LAUNCH TWO NEW RPGS

***Final Fantasy* creator Hironobu Sakaguchi has revealed that his independent development studio, Mist Walker, is currently working on two new role-playing games.** In an interview with Japanese website Gpara.com, Sakaguchi-san said: "We've started working on two full-scale projects and they're both RPGs… I'm packing in all of my 20 years of experience and knowledge to make these games the best that I've created."

The games are unnamed and have not been confirmed for a particular console, but despite Sakaguchi's two-year absence from game development, he's confident in his ability and that of his studio. "I'll incorporate the good points from past games, but am working to my limit in hopes that these games will bring tears to the eyes of their players, in ways that only novels and movies could," he said. "Mist Walker is a small studio, but we've got a lot of sharp employees." Clearly an emotive and convincing narrative is high on the agenda. We can't wait.





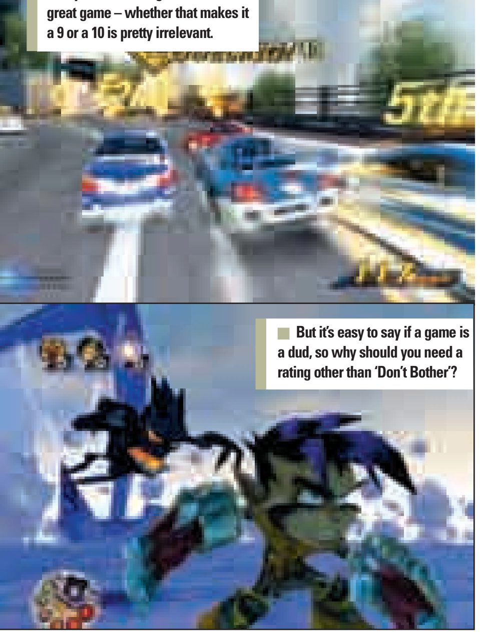
GAMES ROOM 101

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING

NO. 23: SCORES ON THE DOORS

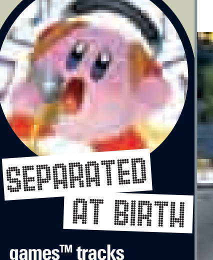
Make no mistake about it, review scores are the bane of games™'s existence. Forum posters constantly moan about how they disagree with them, PR executives occasionally insist that we're 'way off the mark' with them and we even fight amongst ourselves about them. They're the part of the mag that cause the most hassle for us and yet mean the most to many other people, all because a lot of people (including some within the industry) would prefer to have a straightforward number as opposed to a well thought-out justification explaining whether a game was any good or not.

But scores don't actually mean anything in isolation, short of quantifying each game into a neat little pigeonhole that saves people the trouble of reading the review. In a perfect world (or rather, magazine), we wouldn't even have them – and that was very nearly the case while **games™** was being conceived. Still, logic dictates that rather than 10 levels of quality (or a hundred, depending on what you read), you should only need three; 'worth the asking price', 'worth renting' and 'leave on the shelf'. Anything more and you're only asking for trouble – but then, that's the games industry all over.



By our reckoning, *Burnout 3* is a great game – whether that makes it a 9 or a 10 is pretty irrelevant.

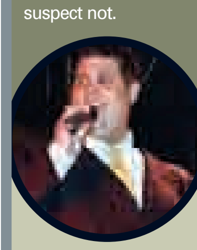
But it's easy to say if a game is a dud, so why should you need a rating other than 'Don't Bother'?



SEPARATED AT BIRTH

games™ tracks down those videogame lookalikes

Is it a coincidence that you never see Nintendo's lovable puffball hero Kirby and sizable *Pop Idol* dropout Rik Waller in the same room together? We suspect not.



Data stream

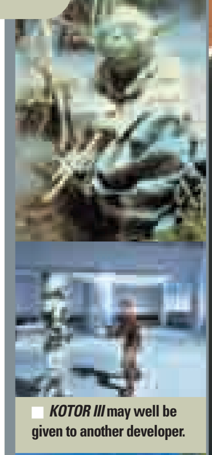
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



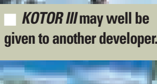
EA'S MUSIC SOUNDS BETTER

In a move that can only be seen as unsurprising by EA's standards, the world-conquering publisher has been trumpeting the greatness of the musical line-up for two of its upcoming titles, rather than promoting the gameplay. Both *FIFA Football 2005* and licence cash-in *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* will feature a bonanza of well-known musicians on their scores, with *FIFA* taking the lion's share of the names – from Air, Faithless and Morrissey to Franz Ferdinand, Scissor Sisters and The Streets, the list is certainly comprehensive. Furthermore, DJ Paul Oakenfold will be creating the main theme for *FIFA*, as well as the entire score for the latest Bond adventure. Lucky man.





KOTOR III may well be given to another developer.



Staff shake-ups are all the rage at LucasArts recently.

DEVELOPERS AXED AS LUCASARTS RESTRUCTURES

NOT THE JOB YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

***Star Wars* game publisher LucasArts has laid off 31 of its development staff, said to be working on *Knights Of The Old Republic III*, as part of what it calls "a major restructuring".**

As well as these lay-offs, LucasArts announced the appointment of long-serving Peter Hirschmann to the role of vice president of product development. He had been managing the development of *Star Wars: Battlefront* and *Mercenaries*.

In an official statement, LucasArts president Jim Ward explained: "Since joining the business in early May, I've taken a hard, critical look at our business… I've come to the conclusion that to make LucasArts thrive, and to position ourselves for the long-term future, we need to make some fundamental changes."

This seems to mean that LucasArts plans to minimise in-house costs by slashing the number of development tasks it undertakes itself, choosing instead to farm out franchises to smaller development houses.

This all points to *Knights Of The Old Republic III* following in the footsteps of LucasArts' as yet unnamed *Episode III* game which has been outsourced to The Collective, responsible for many other LucasArts titles including *Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb*.



FOOTBALL'S NEW FACES

GET YOUR MUG IN FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005

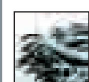
Sega and Sports Interactive are giving gamers the chance to be in upcoming football management sim, *Football Manager 2005*. The management title will feature thumbnail pictures of all the players and staff within the game, providing a welcome visual aid to a genre that invariably consists of screens of text. However, despite real-life players taking up the initial character roster, as the game progresses they will retire, making way for a fictional collection of characters – characters that Sega and Sports Interactive want to look just like you.

"Right from the very beginning, we've encouraged our fans to get involved with the game," said Miles Jacobson, managing director of Sports Interactive. "Now, all players of our games, and future players, have got the perfect way to get more involved with the game and be a part of it."

All you have to do is submit a digital picture of yourself plus information such as your name, age, favourite club and as many other details as you can to ensure your character has the depth required to make them special. Visit www.sigames.com/faceinthegame by 30 September for more details.

Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



SILENT BUT DEADLY

Brace yourself, the T-Virus is real… sort of. *Resident Evil: Outbreak* might have been a disappointment, but Capcom's move to promote it by releasing a mobile 'virus' is pretty clever. By texting 'Virus' to 60022, mobile users can infect themselves with the T-Virus before passing it on to as many of their friends as possible, with the aim being to win a selection of prizes (including consoles, games and DVDs) by infecting the most people. It's a smart idea, although the fact that most people we tried it on thought it was a genuine virus could be the promotion's undoing.



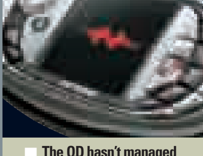


WE'RE ALL DOOMED

Those of you looking forward to a bit of hellspawn-slaying on your Xbox over Christmas might have to wait, as *Doom 3* may slip into 2005. With the Xbox falling way short of the minimum specs for the PC version of the game, the suggestion that the release date may move back has been made by Todd Hollenshead, CEO of id Software. "*Doom 3* is a game that on the PC is very finely tuned," he said. "There was a lot of play balancing [and] we want the Xbox version to be just as good."





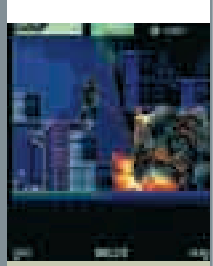


The QD hasn't managed to revive the N-Gage. Yet.

Mobile game of the month

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

We've been continually impressed by Sam Fisher's exploits on every format, but GameLoft's interpretation of *Pandora Tomorrow* is a genuine eye-opener as far as mobile games go. The game improves greatly on the style of the original title, while maintaining the enjoyable side-scrolling action. It also features a huge amount of detail and control on Sam's part, adding new moves such as pinpoint aiming and the option to use the bodies of dead guards to set off traps. Another impressive effort from GameLoft.





MAJOR HIGH-STREET RETAILER DUMPS NOKIA HANDHELD

N-GAGE IS ABANDONED

Having already endured plummeting share prices and a drop in profits just a few months ago, Nokia was stung again recently when leading British high-street videogame chain Game declared that it was to cease carrying the Finnish mobile giant's gaming handset.

"We currently have no plans to stock the N-Gage in Game stores," said Lisa Artemis, PR executive for Game. "There are a number of handheld formats due out in the next few months, such as the PSP, and we will be looking at ways to merchandise these in-store when they are released." This news must be something of a blow to Nokia amid its attempts to see the N-Gage recognised as a viable platform for handheld gaming – not least because this comes less than six months since the revised QD unit was launched.

With the recent country-wide tour to showcase the handheld attracting over 30,000 visitors, though, and more software due out in time for the busy Christmas period, it's likely that Nokia will carry on regardless thanks to its ties with other retailers such as GameStation.

HIGHLY IN-TEXT-TIOUS

MOBILE 'VIRUS' REVEALS POSSIBLE THREAT TO GAME USERS

The potential for what could be the beginning of an epidemic for mobile phone users became apparent last month, when panic broke out over what was believed to be a malicious virus buried inside the code of a downloadable Java game.

Once users installed a copy of *Mosquito*, code hidden inside the game was discovered to be sending out discreet SMS text messages to a premium rate number at the cost of the phone user. However, security experts soon discovered that far from being the work of hackers, the 'virus' was actually the work of the company behind the game, Ojom, in an effort to stamp out piracy.

"[The code] did not work the way it was supposed to; [Ojom] had complaints and removed it from the game" said Mikko Hypponen, head of anti-virus research at electronic security specialists F-Secure.

While this instance of a serious breach in mobile phone security proved to be a false alarm, it has created speculation about a possible threat in the future. The only advice offered so far is that mobile users download their software from authorised vendors. Until a more solid solution can be found, though, we doubt such a suggestion will suffice.

WE WANTED TO TALK TO GAMES INDUSTRY VETERAN PETER MOLYNEUX ABOUT HIS LATEST TITLE, FABLE. WHAT WE ALSO GOT WERE TALES OF PASSIONATE EMBRACES, TWO-DAY-OLD SANDWICHES AND THE REASON WHY HIS GAMES TAKE SO LONG TO DEVELOP…



"WHAT I HAVE DONE IN THE PAST AND MUST STOP DOING FROM THIS DAY FORWARD IS TALKING ABOUT GAMES BEFORE THEY'RE ANYTHING MORE THAN A CONCEPT IN MY HEAD"

PETER MOLYNEUX, LIONHEAD STUDIOS

LIONHEAD STUDIOS

PETER MOLYNEUX

On meeting Peter Molyneux, we immediately notice the messy notepad in front of him. A peculiar first observation to make in the company of the man who has been making waves in gaming since *Populous* through *Theme Park* to *Black & White,* but a valid one, as Molyneux continues to draw more charts, shapes and diagrams. Sometimes to emphasise key words, occasionally to help explain a point, usually indecipherable to all but himself.

We're here to grill Molyneux about Lionhead Studios' latest title, *Fable*. How does he feel after what must have been a tough four years of development? "It's very emotional," he answers, sounding worn out yet relieved. "To be honest with you, I have to be careful not to break down in tears because it is an incredible feeling of accomplishment. When you climb a mountain that hard and that difficult, it's really, really tough. Just to see the game being played by anyone is an amazing feeling and to see people actually enjoying it, it's amazing."

Xbox RPG fans have been waiting a while for *Fable* and Molyneux is keen to talk about development times. "Let's just talk about why I am really stupid because what I do, and have done in the past and must stop doing from this day forward, is talk about games before they're actually anything more than a concept in my head. We spoke about *Fable* before there was one character sketch and what ends up happening is that people think 'Jesus, this game has been around forever!' So these days of me talking about concepts before they have actually even begun to be final have got to stop."

Molyneux's past titles, such as *Populous* and *Magic Carpet*, stretched technology to breaking point and his forthcoming games look set to continue that trend. So what comes first, the ideas or the technology? "What I should do is look at the technology, obviously, but what I *do* do is think of the ideas. The frightening thing about that is I have no idea where these ideas come from. It is the most inconvenient times that ideas have popped into my head. Even when in the middle of passionate embraces I've said 'Hang on a second, I've just got to stop there… just got to write something down'. You never know if it's going to be in the middle of the night, in the middle of the day, sitting on the toilet, in the middle of an interview." We lean in, to see if we can make sense of the notepad sketches, hopefully unveiling his next big plans. No such luck. "Every great superhero comic I have ever read when I was a kid, the bits I enjoyed the most in every film I've seen, is when they didn't have power and when they discover they have power," Molyneux continues, explaining *Fable*'s central idea. "And that's what *Fable* is really about – it's the discovery of the player having power." He scrawls circles to emphasise the words 'discovery' and 'power'.

Fable's gameplay revolves around a 'good and evil' dynamic, but Bioware's *Knights Of The Old Republic* beat Lionhead to the punch. "That system was ripped off completely from *Black & White*. I really hope people forget about that system," Molyneux says. "In fact, I'm relying on them forgetting about that system. The difference between *Fable* and *Knights Of The Old Republic* is that *Fable* tracks your morality every single second of gameplay. That's a lot cooler than doing a quest and doing A or B; this is much more like a flow." Despite his pride in this moral system and the little touches throughout *Fable*, Molyneux insists he doesn't want to shepherd the player towards these, preferring to tempt them instead. "I know there are lots of people out there who find immersive worlds about as interesting as a two-day-old sandwich. They just want to go on and play the quests, they don't want to mess around getting married and all that. However, what I'll make sure I do, I put plenty of temptations in their way. I think temptations in the way of this really strong story that guides you through are important."

So the first time Molyneux played through *Fable*, was he good or evil? The notepad is abandoned for the first time as Molyneux leans back in his chair. "What do you think?" he asks. We think he'd make a great bad guy. "You're right," he says, laughing. "They have all the fun."

Fable *is due out on the Xbox in October and will be reviewed next issue*



THE HARD CELL

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BUY AN N-GAGE TO EXPERIENCE THE BEST IN MOBILE PHONE GAMING – THERE ARE PLENTY OF DECENT HANDSETS OUT THERE THAT ARE JUST AS GOOD AT PLAYING GAMES AS THEY ARE AT MAKING CALLS…

While the initial volley of gaming mobiles haven't really managed to wow the public, companies such as Nokia and Sony Ericsson are determined to prove that it won't just be the DS and the PSP that will absorb all your valuable free time in the future.

Today's mobile phone technology can provide you with yet another reason to become completely antisocial, even if it is in a slightly cut-down form. Gone are the days when the only way to amuse yourself with a mobile phone without a mate on the other end was to sit on the bus and flit through ringtones. And it's not just a case of playing *Snake* or *Pairs* any more, either. A wealth of mobile gaming has become available, and thanks to some quick thinking in the licensing department, cell-phone versions of all the latest titles – as well as many classics – are now becoming available as regularly as titles on 'proper' platforms.

With mobile gaming blossoming and becoming a bigger and more visually pleasing flower with every day, it seems a good time to take another look at some of the latest phones on the market to see what they're capable of, and to see what games are great right now.

TESTED TO THE LIMIT

O2 X2



- **Price:** £200 (Handset), £150 (Pre-Pay), Free (Contract)
- **Dimensions:** 81 x 44 x 21
- **Weight:** 89g
- **Screen:** 128 x 128 LCD, 65,000 colours
- **Battery Life:** 170 hours (standby), 3-4 hours (talk time)
- **Extras:** Bluetooth, Tri-Band, GPRS, Built-in Camera

At first glance, the O2 X2 (available only on the O2 network) isn't exactly impressive. Yes, it's petite enough to fit the smallest pocket thanks to the clamshell design, and it's light compared to other phones of the same dimensions. However, it does feel rather insubstantial and the whole phone has a distinct plastic feel. The screen, too, is remarkably small, with O2 opting for a square display rather than the usual elongated style of clamshell phones – not great for playing games.

Turn it on and things don't get much better. The X2 takes a while to boot up, a problem that continues when you try to use the camera or anything Java-related, including games. The handset comes pre-loaded with just one game (a Tamagotchi-style pet game, *Mobimon*) which is rather limited. However, the option to connect to the O2 Arcade does open the door for future downloads once the games offered on 02's website are made compatible with this handset – unfortunately, none of them were at the time of going to press.

As a representation of mobiles from the cheaper end of the scale, the X2 does a fairly decent job of everything you'd want a phone to do. From a gaming perspective, though, it doesn't really cut it – the visual and sound capabilities are too limited, while the button layout doesn't help matters. It's hard to recommend this against the competition.

VERDICT 5/10
COMPETENT, BUT HARDLY THE GAMER'S CHOICE

"THE INCREASED SCREEN SIZE ON THE NOKIA 6600 MAKES IT A POPULAR CHOICE AMONG STYLE GURUS AND MOBILE GAMERS ALIKE"

NOKIA 6600

- **Price:** £300 (Handset), £300 (Pre-Pay), £50 (Contract)
- **Dimensions:** 109 x 58 x 24mm
- **Weight:** 125g
- **Screen:** 176 x 208 pixels LCD, 65,000 colours
- **Battery Life:** 150-240 hours (standby), 2-4 hours (talk time)
- **Extras:** Bluetooth, Tri-Band, GPRS, Built-in Camera

Chunky. It's the perfect word to describe Nokia's larger entry into the mobile market, although that's not a bad thing. Despite being bigger than average, the 6600 is reassuringly hefty without being heavy. The greatest benefit of the 6600's size is the larger screen which, as well as offering benefits when using the menus or camera, makes it perfect for gaming. The phone also comes with a removable memory card (32Mb, although this can be increased) which can store a large amount of games, photos and ringtones. The advanced polyphonic sound support is a nice touch.

Unfortunately, while other manufacturers are including more advanced titles on their handsets, Nokia is standing firm with the outdated *Snake EX* and *Mix-Pix*. Thankfully, the phone's Java support is capable of carrying the more advanced downloadable titles, so you'll be able to get your hands on plenty of impressive games.

Although the 6600 can't claim to be the cheapest mobile on the market, it is among the most proficient if you're looking for a proper mobile that can also hold its own for gaming. Definitely worth considering.

VERDICT 8/10
A WORTHY CONTENDER WITH GREAT GAMING POTENTIAL

POCKET WONDERS FOR WHEN IT'S NO LONGER GOOD TO TALK



New phones come with Bluetooth and infra-red capabilities, allowing them to communicate with other devices such as PCs. Using a PC to download music files and images before transferring them to your phone is a cheap way of obtaining ringtones and wallpaper images.



Most phones nowadays come with a camera. Some handsets allow you to take movie clips, while others simply stop at still images. The quality is still fairly crude, but the introduction of megapixel phone-cams will soon deliver pictures rivalling those taken by proper digital cameras.



Some mobile phones can also double up as MP3 players, allowing owners to listen to a selection of music tracks without needing an extra gadget. Although MP3 phones can't currently match the storage space of dedicated MP3 players, it won't be long before they catch up.

TESTED TO THE LIMIT

NOKIA 6230

- **Price:** £300 (Handset), £30-130 (Contract)
- **Dimensions:** 103 x 44 x 20mm
- **Weight:** 97g
- **Screen:** 128 x 128 pixels TFT, 65,000 colours
- **Battery Life:** 150 hours (standby), 3-5 hours (talk time)
- **Extras:** Bluetooth, Tri-Band, GPRS, Built-in Camera

We've always found Nokia inconsistent when it comes to handsets – for every one that proves a delight, there's another that just doesn't do it for us. The 6230 falls into the latter category, at least on looks; the tacky plastic casing combined with the fiddly thumb pad gives the phone a retro feel that doesn't sit with the idea of technological wizardry. Peek under the hood, though, and you'll learn that looks can be deceiving. With features such as a camera, Java support, WAP capabilities, an upgradable 32Mb memory card, an FM radio and support for an MP3/AAC digital music player, this is a very capable phone.

The 6230 can run pretty much any game on the market today. The pre-loaded software is varied, featuring *Beach Rally II* (a superior racer), *Chess Puzzle* (a chess-based puzzler) and a fairly basic golf title, but the big problem is control – the software is up to scratch but the handling isn't. The face buttons are too fiddly and because the thumb pad is overly sensitive it can be hard to make selections. If it wasn't for this design flaw, the 6230 would be a great gaming phone. But a lack of control places it in the 'close, but no mobile cigar' category.

VERDICT 6/10
A SOLID PHONE MARRED BY UNUSABLE BUTTONS

"THE HIGH-QUALITY SCREEN AND DECENT BUTTON LAYOUT MAKE THE T630 WORTH CHECKING OUT IF YOU'RE INTO GAMING"

"THE 6230 HAS GREAT SOFTWARE BUT THE FIDDLY CONTROLS PLACE IT IN THE 'CLOSE, BUT NO MOBILE CIGAR' CATEGORY"

SONY ERICSSON T630

- **Price:** £250 (Handset), £200 (Pre-Pay), £50 (Contract)
- **Dimensions:** 102 x 43 x 17mm
- **Weight:** 93g
- **Screen:** 128 x 160 pixels, 65,000 colours
- **Battery Life:** 315 hours (standby), 14 hours (talk time)
- **Extras:** Bluetooth, Tri-Band, GPRS, Built-in Camera

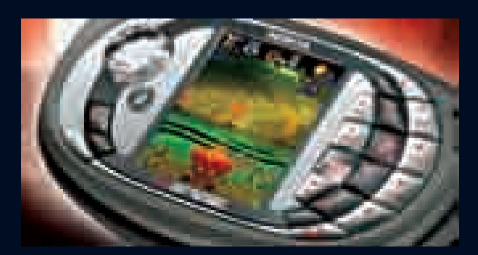
From a brief glance at Sony Ericsson's new handset, you can tell where it gets its influences – the white finish, sleek lines and backlit casing all scream 'iPod'. The T630 is all about style and while it doesn't offer much more functionality than the older T610, it does look nicer thanks to the rear fascia resembling a digital camera. That the controls for the camera and getting the phone online aren't on the face of the handset is also good news, as it leaves the keypad less cluttered.

As the only phone in our test with a TFT screen, the T630's display is crisp and clear – the screen might not be as large as we'd have liked, but the visual quality makes up for this. While the button layout is also gamer-friendly, with its ridged keys standing out for easy pressing, the T630's built-in joystick really helps matters. Sadly, the games that come with the phone don't use the joystick, but the fact that both titles are both fairly advanced for mobile freebies (*Q*Bert* is as playable as ever while *V-Rally 2* is fun, if limited) is another plus point.

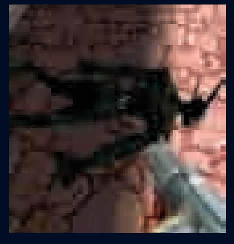
As improvements go, the T630 is definitely preferable to its older Sony Ericsson brothers, and while the exterior might make it seem pretentious, the fact that it can comfortably hold its own on the gaming front makes it more appealing.

VERDICT 7/10
DECENT ENOUGH, WITH STYLE TO BOOT

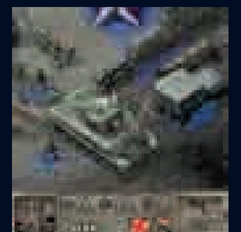
ALWAYS N-GAGED REASONS TO LIKE NOKIA'S HANDHELD

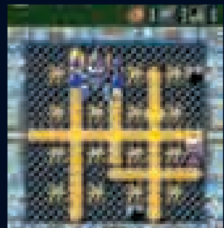


While the original N-Gage was plagued by a range of design oddities, the reworked QD compensates for some of these failings. Game cards can now be slotted in without having to take the handset apart, you can use it properly as a phone, and the keys have been raised to make them easier to use.



There are more than a few quality titles calling the N-Gage home. *Ashen*, for instance, is a highly-enjoyable FPS with plenty of atmosphere and gameplay, while games like Sega's *Pocket Kingdom* (which is essentially an MMORPG on your phone) are taking handheld gaming in a new direction.





The future of N-Gage gaming is looking bright with some popular licences appearing on the format, from decent soldier-based combat in *Pathway To Glory* and the continuing adventures of Sam Fisher in *Pandora Tomorrow* to the likes of *Bomberman*, *Worms World Party* and *Leisure Suit Larry*.

GAME AS YOU GO

THE RANGE OF PHONE GAMES AVAILABLE HAS GROWN CONSIDERABLY IN RECENT MONTHS. WHAT'S MORE, YOU CAN NOW PLAY SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CONSOLE GAMES ON YOUR MOBILE HANDSET…

1. DRIV3R

Price: £5 **Tested On:** Nokia 6810 **Available from:** o2.co.uk/games

While the PS2 game features a ton of bugs, the fact this is an entirely different kind of game means it won't feature the same problems. Resembling older *Grand Theft Auto* games, this top-down crime adventure sees you take control of Tanner, an undercover cop on the trail of a group of car thieves.

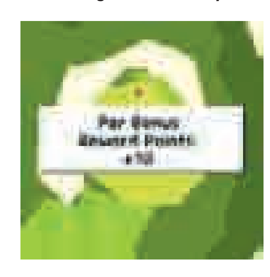




2. TIGER WOODS GOLF

Price: £5 **Tested On:** Nokia 7210 **Available from:** o2.co.uk/games

Featuring a faithful reproduction of the world-famous Pebble Beach course, *Tiger Woods Golf* is one of the more advanced phone games out there. Instead of the view remaining completely top-down through the whole of the action, your position becomes fully 3D rendered. In addition, Tiger himself is fully animated.

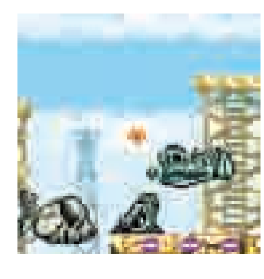


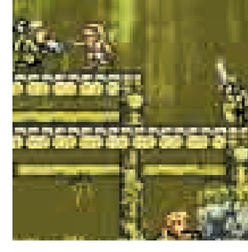


3. METAL SLUG

Price: £5 **Tested On:** Nokia 7210 **Available from:** o2.co.uk/games

Metal Slug is a quirky, World War II-inspired side-scrolling shoot-'em-up. You simply guide your Rambo-esque character through eight charming levels of cartoon faux war. Set fire to soldiers, blow up airplanes and tanks, and stay alive. Great fun, and a surprisingly faithful miniature take on the originals.

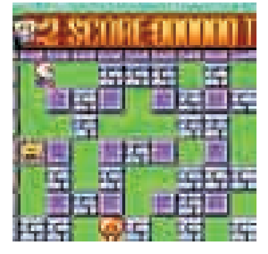


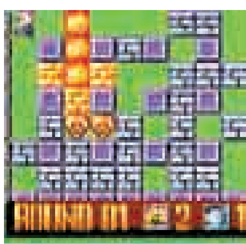


4. BOMBERMAN

Price: £5 **Tested On:** Nokia 7250 **Available from:** o2.co.uk/games

This version of *Bomberman* is just like the games you can find on the main consoles, except with more simplistic graphics and smaller arenas. In case you didn't already know, you're required to run around planting bombs in the hope of blowing up your enemies while avoiding explosions yourself. Addictive.

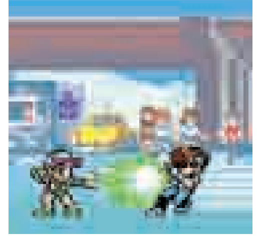


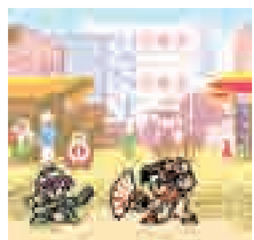


5. THE KING OF FIGHTERS

Price: £5 **Tested On:** Nokia 7210 **Available from:** o2.co.uk/games

Adapted from the ultra hardcore SNK series of beat-'em-ups bearing the same name, this features four cutesy, childlike versions of famous *KOF* characters, each with their own moves and signature attacks. The game obviously lacks the complexity of the full versions, but is still good nonetheless.





6. PANDORA TOMORROW

Price: £3 **Tested On:** Sony Ericsson Z600
Available from: gameloft.com

Take control of the legendary stealth master Sam Fisher to save the world once again from the comfort of your toilet cubicle. Seven missions await you, requiring your quick skills and cunning execution. Use weapons, defuse bombs and create shadows to hide in by taking out light bulbs. Great sneaky stuff.





"**TIGER WOODS GOLF** IS ONE OF THE **MORE ADVANCED PHONE GAMES** OUT THERE. INSTEAD OF THE VIEW REMAINING COMPLETELY TOP-DOWN THROUGH **THE WHOLE OF THE ACTION**, YOUR POSITION BECOMES **RENDERED IN FULL 3D**"

TECH TERMS

Learn the lingo for those moments when you can't get anything to work and need to speak to someone at the call centre.

BLUETOOTH
Enables different devices such as phones and laptops to communicate with each other wire-free over short distances.

GPRS
General Packet Radio Service is an upgrade for GSM networks enabling a maximum data rate of 115Kbps.

GSM
Global System for Mobile communications. A standard for digital cellular communications used in Europe and some other parts of the world. It's used in four frequency bands: 850MHz, 900MHz, 1,800MHz and 1,900MHz.

JAVA/J2ME
Java is an open-standard programming language and software platform to run applications on different devices. J2ME is the version of the Java 2 platform used for smaller devices with limited memory, such as mobile phones and PDAs. Java is the language used to create the games on this page.

MMS
Multimedia Messaging Service. Allows colour images, graphics and audio files to be sent with text messages. MMS messages can be received by other suitably equipped phones and email addresses.

PDA
Personal Digital Assistant. A personal organiser that allows the storing of information such as addresses and notes and can also run games.

Polyphonic Ringtones
Polyphonic ringtones use multiple tones to give a more real, 'layered' sound and greater musical accuracy when replicating popular tunes.

WAP
Wireless Application Protocol. A standard that allows mobile phones to access specially designed internet services, such as news, email and downloadable games and ringtones.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE

"THE MOST DESPERATELY AWAITED TRIO OF GAMES EVER – DOOM 3, PS2. ONLY PIOUS SONY DISCIPLES PLACE HOPES SUCH AS KILLZONE



I suffer from a kind of sporadic insomnia. You can never tell when it will strike, but some nights I'll sleep just fine for a few hours and then click on like a damned torch. Living near a major metropolitan target, it could be subconscious fear of the al Qaeda nuclear/biological/chemical threat (highly unlikely), the prospect of ever-more-fashionable home invasion from local criminals (slightly more likely) or just my heart desperately having to heave excesses of cream and sugar around my body after eating too much Edy's Grand Fudge Tracks ice cream right before bed (just plain likely).

Recently, in the grey half-light of pre-sunrise, I snapped awake. 5.12am it said on the clock. In my head, just one preposterous thought: finish *Half-Life*. Why? I've no idea. In the rare clarity afforded before the world has run its tendrils into you on a new day, it seemed to make perfect, unquestionable sense. In particular, something about *Half-Life 2* getting closer and, what a disgrace, not even finishing the first instalment, one of the most esteemed games of our time. Explaining it now is like trying to explain a dream to your spouse just moments afterward, the reason and context crumbling away even as you form the words. Before long all you have is, "… and you were there, but you weren't you, you were that helpful guy we met in the record store last week, and anyway he'd taken me – you'd taken me – on this donkey ride to get to the jungle before it closed, but we couldn't get in because I only had one shoe on, so…"

Only the PlayStation2 edition of *Half-Life* – which is, to be frank, the worst possible version – awaited me. Still, that's not exactly a problem; I've enjoyed it before, I'll enjoy it again. A good game still shines through regardless. Reaching for the power switch around the back of the machine, however, I felt something sticky cling between my fingers. Clambering foggy-brained into the nook between some consoles and a subwoofer, aided by a bit of light courtesy of Mr Edison, my curious eye fell upon a mass of spider web substantial enough to house not one but two arachnids, perhaps legally married in the state of Massachusetts, now living comfortably on the back of my PlayStation2. Their delicate grey abode was covering the entire port of the cooling fan. Now, had the PS2 seen even a moment's action in god-knows-how-long rather than my Xbox and the joys of Live taking up all my time, their home would've been history before I'd ever known about it. Instead, those sons of bitches met their demise at the business end of a wailing Dustbuster, but nevertheless I was unsettled. Such neglect.

Loading up the game revealed even more abandonment – my previous time-stamped *Half-Life* save turned out to be from a similarly ungodly hour some time last year. Thinking about it, I didn't recall doing much with my PS2 since then. If there'd been something to play on the damn thing, besides a variety of multiformat releases that were handled better by other hardware, it would have been whirring away on a regular basis



HALF-LIFE 2, HALO 2 – ISN'T COMING TO ABOVE THE NAMES ON THAT LIST"

rather than acting as a drop-in shelter for eight-legged invertebrates. Illogically, it actually saddens me when things I own fall out of use. A pair of shoes; a waffler; an old computer; a gag ball.

With analysts – for what they're worth – generally predicting a 2006 rollout for PS3, what is PS2 going to give us in the interim? No matter what awe sources, including this very magazine, try to manufacture for the likes of *Burnout 3*, be under no illusions. The 'Big Three', the most desperately awaited trio of games ever, garnering the greatest amount of informed and not-so-informed rambling in the nation's game stores, internet forums and virtual lobbies, are (and you know this already) US-born titles *Doom 3*, *Half-Life 2* and *Halo 2*. None of which, you'll recall, are headed for PlayStation2. Only piously monogamous single-format Sony disciples place deific hopes such as *Killzone* above the names in that list. PS2 is still king, in my book, for curios like *Katamari Damashii*, but man cannot live by novelty alone. *San Andreas* is a good contender – perhaps we can put more than a little faith in that, at least for as long as the exclusivity contract between Sony and Rockstar holds out this time around.

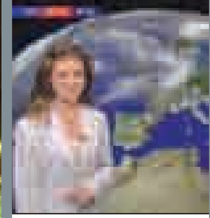
Damn those little spiders! I never did finish *Half-Life*. Still, I can't see my insomnia curing itself any time soon… so maybe next year.

Many thanks



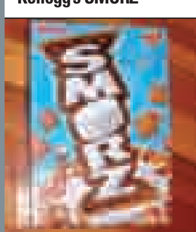
MISS ABOUT BRITAIN…

Lisa Burke



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

Kellogg's SMORZ



WANT ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE SHAPE? THEN DROP HIM A LINE AT: theshape@comcast.net HE MIGHT LISTEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY

AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

WHITE CASTLE



What with the new movie *Harold & Kumar Go To White Castle*, you'll have been hearing about White Castle. It's open all hours and beloved by stoners with the munchies. And dang tasty. But everything it sells is square. And I don't trust square meat, dammit.

US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	PS2
2	ESPN NFL 2K5	Sega	PS2
3	Spider-Man 2	Activision	PS2
4	ESPN NFL 2K5	Sega	Xbox
5	NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	Xbox
6	Spider-Man 2	Activision	Xbox
7	Spider-Man 2	Activision	GC
8	Driv3r	Atari	PS2
9	Tales Of Symphonia	Namco	GC
10	Halo	Microsoft	Xbox

(Updated 18/8/04)



ESPN NFL 2K5

NCAA Football 2005



KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT TIM ROGERS

"PERHAPS THE EXPERIENCE OF PLAYING A GAME SHOULD AMOUNT TO CHAIR AND LOOKING AT YOUR OWN REFLECTION AS A HIRED WOMAN

Shigesato Itoi, producer of *Mother 2* and two other games, said in a recent interview that videogames should be like prostitutes, not lovers. Perhaps, he mused, the experience of playing a videogame should amount to something like sitting in a chair and looking at your own reflection as a hired woman rubs your shoulders.

A year ago this month, I sold all of my games. I spent a year thinking what games I'd buy if I ever decided to pick up videogames again. Well, now I've straightened out a few things, including a steady place to live – one that has a television and everything. For less than 30 of your pounds and knowledge of Tokyo's used videogame stores, I picked up a Super Famicom and a library of games including *Secret Of Mana*, *Chrono Trigger*, *Final Fantasy IV*, *V* and *VI*, *Mother 2* and *Dragon Quest V*. I'd thought that *Mother 2* (my second favourite game ever) would win all my gaming time. Wrong. I spent three hours playing every other save on every other cartridge before I finally picked up *Dragon Quest V*. Upon starting it, I was greeted with a dubious sound effect, the same one that plays when the demon warlord kills a major character a quarter of the way into the game: all three save files had been erased. The game had been left idle for too long. I started a new quest. Then I played for 13 hours.

My, my, what a fantastic game. To think that I've always held *Final Fantasy IV* in higher regard! That game tells a comic-book story of a fantasy knight kicking an alien power's ass; *Dragon Quest V* is about fathers and their children. The story evolves over the course of 20 years of one man's life, and with its simple graphics it's telling a story with heart. I could go on and on. I won't. I'll just say that this game fits Itoi's definition of a prostitute game, and then explain why.

My new apartment, I kid you not, is located above a 'terekura' shop. That's contracted Japanese for 'telephone club'. It's a place men go to buy phone numbers for girls who will, as we say in the industry, 'come to their houses and have sex with them for money'. At the request of a magazine that's interested in these kinds of things (and you thought I only write about games), I subscribed to a kind of free online version of a terekura. These sites are viewable, ironically, only with cellular phones and the girls are just genuine lonely housewives, not prostitutes.

On such sites, a man is granted a hundred points. Looking at women's profiles is free. Emailing a woman costs 39 points. A woman can write emails and send pictures of herself to men for free. The result: a man will cram as many words as possible into his first email to a woman, and she'll reply with something like, 'Oh, you live near Ikebukuro? What train line?' He'll reply with, 'I only have 61 points left! Let's get it on already!' Then he has 22



TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON TWENTY THREE: THE LIFE OF A DRAGON QUEST HERO

Birii wa mamono no mure wo yattsuketa! Sorezore 108 pointo no keikenchi wo kakutoku!	Billy defeated the monsters! And then got 108 experience points!
Birii wa ashimoto wo shirabeta… shikashi nanimo mitsukaranakatta.	Billy searched the ground beneath him… and he found nothing.
Birii wa takarabako wo aketa… shikashi takarabako wa karappo data.	Billy opened the treasure chest… and the treasure chest was empty.
Birii wa tansu wo akete shirabeta… toku ni nanimo mitsukaranakatta.	Billy opened the dresser and looked around . . . and found nothing special.
Birii wa games™ toiu zasshi ni nozokikonda… tondemonai koto mitsuketa.	Billy peered deep into a magazine called games™… and found something terrible.

SOMETHING LIKE SITTING IN A RUBS YOUR SHOULDERS"

useless points left over. Can a meeting be arranged with only a hundred points? I wouldn't be surprised by some horny men's ingenuity. For those lacking in smarts, extra points (purchasable by bank transfer) cost ¥10 each, with a 30-point bonus on each 300. These sites pull in millions of yen a month for their maintainers. They're booming like the videogame industry was back in the late Eighties.

The Japanese love gambling; in a country where a pint of milk costs ¥178 and a quart costs ¥356, you'd be surprised to find that pachinko balls are actually cheaper if you rent them in bulk. Yuji Horii, the producer of *Dragon Quest*, loves gambling enough to put slot machines into all of his games; playing *Dragon Quest V* again gives me the vague feeling that this man's grasp on the risk-taking spirit of Eighties Japanese business may yet pull this country part-way out of recession when *VIII* hits. The 12-year-old *Dragon Quest V* has already pulled me out of a personal recession, and for now, that's really something.

Kind regards



HOW MUCH FOR ¥10,000?

I recently had an argument with a friend who writes for a Japanese gaming magazine. I said that the Japanese don't have what westerners would consider a standard of 'quality' in games. He said that the last game he could think of that made him feel good about paying several thousand yen was *Dragon Quest VII*.

Dragon Quest VIII is, most likely, being released in December. The prettied-up remake of *Dragon Quest V*, launched this March, was a guaranteed seller and so Sony gave it an ¥8,900 (£43) price tag. I find this outrageous. *Dragon Quest VIII*, sure to massage the tired Japanese masses for years to come, might cost as much as ¥10,000 (£50) just for the hell of it and sell as many as 8 million copies, which would encourage this sort of pricing in the future.



JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	World Soccer Winning Eleven 8	Konami	PS2
2	The Legend Of Stafy 3	Nintendo	GBA
3	Paper Mario RPG	Nintendo	GC
4	Final Fantasy I & II Advance	Square Enix	GBA
5	Jikkyo Power Pro Baseball 11	Konami	PS2
6	Pachinko Slot! Fist Of The North Star	Sammy	PS2
7	Taiko no Tatsujin: 4th Generation	Namco	PS2
8	Power Pro-kun Pocket 1/2	Konami	GBA
9	SOCOM II: US Navy Seals	SCEJ	PS2
10	One Piece: Round The Land!	Bandai	PS2

(Updated 8/8/04)


Winning Eleven 8

Paper Mario RPG

"NATURALLY, WE WERE VERY DISAPPOINTED BY SONY'S POLICY. WE DIDN'T GET APPROVAL FROM SCEA – IT DOESN'T LIKE 2D GAMES ANY MORE"
SHINYA MORISHITA, SNK

SHINYA MORISHITA AND YOSHIHITO KOYAMA

SNK

When we got to meet two guys from one of videogames' most respected studios, who were in a jubilant mood following the announcement of a deal that will see their beloved 2D products released in Europe, we couldn't pass up a photo opportunity. We were pretty excitable too, after getting our hands on *SNK Vs Capcom Chaos*, *King Of Fighters 2002* and *2003*, and *KOF: Maximum Impact*, so that may explain this photo – SNK's Shinya Morishita and Yoshihito Koyama battling their way out of financial difficulties and ready to fight for the survival of two-dimensional gaming. There's no doubt that we're firmly in the 3D age, so does SNK feel it's facing an uphill struggle, and that 2D may even have died already?

"No, I don't think so yet," says Morishita-san, SNK's overseas marketing manager. Unsurprisingly, Vijay Chadha, managing director of Ignition Entertainment, which will be distributing SNK's titles in Europe, agrees. "When discussing 2D games with SNK and the response it's had in the US in terms of the PlayStation2 version [of *Metal Slug 3*] not coming out, it's had an influx of fans desperately wanting *Metal Slug 3* to come out on PS2. So I think that message is loud and clear to SCEA." Sony's American operation decided a few months ago that *Metal Slug 3* isn't of a high enough quality to get a US release. Morishita-san is understandably frustrated. "Naturally we were very disappointed by Sony's policy," he says. "It has differing policies between SCEA, SCEI and SCEE. Unfortunately, we didn't get approval from SCEA for *Metal Slug 3*. It doesn't like 2D games any more."

Considering the size of the US market, SNK can't afford to miss out on this potential stream of revenue, and the company says it will carry on trying to get its games published. "In the USA, PS2 has a huge market. Of course we will continue [to lobby SCEA]," says Yoshihito Koyama, director of overseas marketing at SNK. Interestingly, *Metal Slug 4* and *5* have been approved for the American market, but they'll be appearing on the PS2 in a combo pack. It seems that 2D games are only acceptable if marketed in a similar vein to retro titles – in a compilation (*King Of Fighters 2002* and *2003* will be released together too).

Enjoying greater success is *KOF: Maximum Impact*, SNK's first 3D game. It's secured a September release in the States, although a UK date is yet to be announced. But what does this mean for further 2D games? Will the move into the third dimension alienate long-term fans? "For 2D fighting games, *King Of Fighters* will continue on Atomiswave hardware," says Morishita. "The 3D games are just exclusively for the consumer market, so both of them will continue." This should come as welcome news, especially since *Maximum Impact* retains much of the feel of its 2D forebears. "In the US, the queues to get your hands on [*Maximum Impact*] were more than enough to say that consumers are very satisfied and the main ingredients are still there," says Chadha. "If you want to call it the sexiness, or how the game plays, or what the X factor is… you can't bottle it, but it's there." "If you play *KOF: Maximum Impact* it feels like it's 2D," says Morishita-san. "It's 3D, of course, but it feels like 2D action. Very quick response, very fast. I don't think the fans will be disappointed."

With SNK's focus shifted to the PS2 and Xbox, you'd be forgiven for thinking the company would be sad to say goodbye to its Neo Geo MVS hardware. But the issue of piracy that plagued releases means it's not hard to let go. "We've reached the point that after just one day of release, there's a pirate copy on the market," explains Morishita-san. "That's why we gave up. After all, the MVS has seen how many years? We've had 15 years of using this system – it's rather old fashioned, the capacity is maximised and the protection is very weak." But while SNK has lost a gaming platform, it's gained a new partner with Ignition. "Since last year, we were looking for partners in Europe," says Morishita-san. "We decided on Ignition [because] we understand each other, so we want both companies to grow." And if that means more SNK titles for PAL gamers, we wish them all the best.

Metal Slug 3 *for Xbox and PS2 is due out in the UK in October*



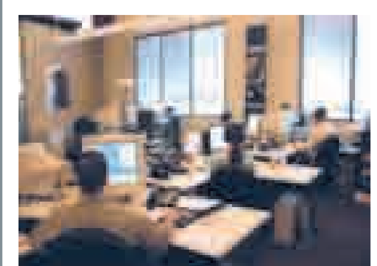
SNK HAS A REPUTATION FOR PRODUCING SOME OF THE FINEST 2D GAMES KNOWN TO MAN. BUT WITH THE INDUSTRY INSISTING THAT 2D IS DEAD, HOW WILL THE STUDIO SURVIVE? PERHAPS A NEW PUBLISHING DEAL MIGHT HELP…

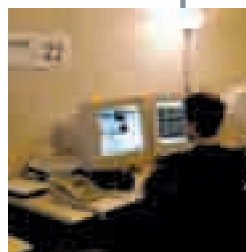


COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** VISITS A DIFFERENT DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH, THE WILDS OF CANADA CALL AS WE SEARCH FOR A RELIC…

RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

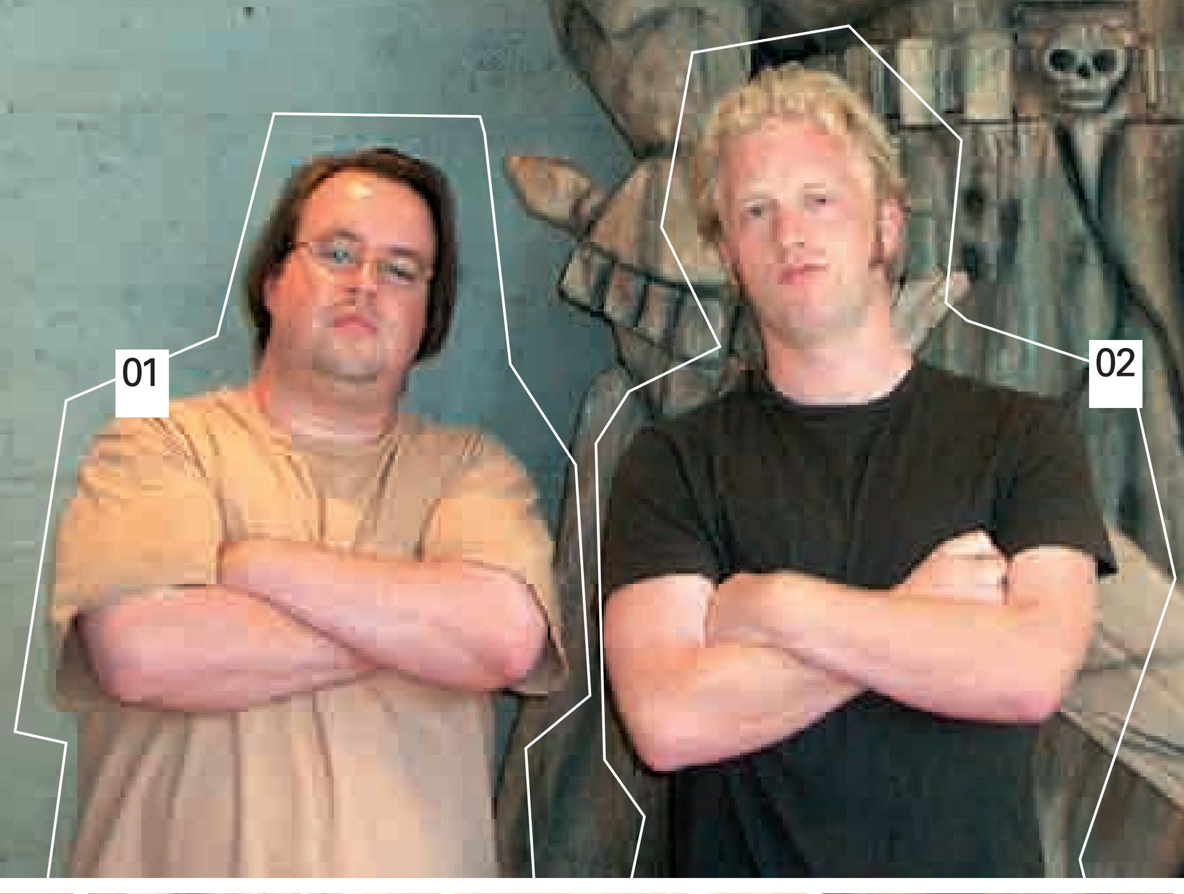


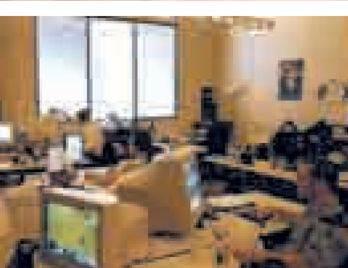


SETTING UP A STUDIO ON A CREDIT CARD IS ONE THING – BUILDING IT INTO A LEADING RTS CREATOR IS SOMETHING ELSE. WITH CANADA A HOTBED OF DEVELOPMENT TALENT, IT LOOKS LIKE RELIC IS IN THE THICK OF IT…

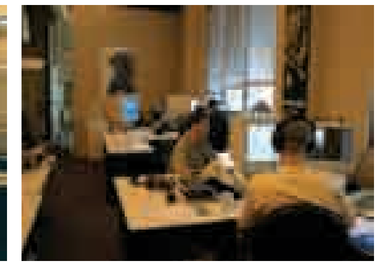
It's well known that creating a licensed game is a challenge – getting the perfect balance between solid gameplay and an accurate representation of the licence is never easy. Of course, developers can often rely on people buying into their efforts for the brand alone, regardless of how well the final product actually plays – you only have to look at the success (and quality) of a large number of movie tie-ins to see that. Unfortunately, that's a luxury that Vancouver-based developer Relic Entertainment doesn't have with its current title, *Dawn Of War*. Perhaps that's because the project, grounded deep within the Warhammer

From a small office paid for on a single credit card to a respected and profitable developer – it really can happen, you know.









40,000 world as it is, is based upon one of the most popular tabletop war games of all time – one with so many fans it's hard to comprehend. You would guess that if *Dawn Of War* overlooks a single detail or gets the smallest thing wrong, orc heads are going to roll.

Still, if you think the wrath of an angry die-rolling Warhammer fanatic is bad, it pales in comparison to how Relic treats its own work. "I think we're our toughest critics," says Jonathan Dowdeswell, producer of *Dawn Of War*. "We take quality very seriously and want to be the best developer in the world. We'd like people to unanimously agree that our games are the most entertaining gaming experience you can have, period. We have to be realistic, of course – we're not dealing with Hollywood budgets in games yet – but that just means we try and work smart, and focus all of our energy on a few great things instead of lots of pretty good things." It's this thinking – to build games upon a small number of quality concepts instead of aiming unrealistically high and falling short – that's been the backbone of Relic since it opened. From its beginnings

"THERE HAVE BEEN **HARD TIMES AT RELIC,** BUT WE'VE SCRAPED THROUGH SOME POTENTIALLY BAD SITUATIONS WITH JUST A **FEW CUTS AND BRUISES**"

JONATHAN DOWDESWELL, PRODUCER

in a small office above a Vancouver nightclub in 1997 to its current position as a Game Of The Year developer, the studio has come a long way since CEO Alex Garden (described by *Computer Gaming World*'s editor-in-chief as 'the gaming industry's next Side Meier') used his credit card to set Relic on the path to success.

Not surprisingly, the road hasn't been smooth and many lessons have been learnt along the way. "The biggest change to the company has really been in how we conceptualise new ideas and the beginning process for development," says Jay Wilson, lead designer on *Dawn Of War*. "We used to work on coming up with game concepts first and foremost,



MEET THE RELIC BOYS

1 JAY WILSON, LEAD DESIGNER, RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

IN A NUTSHELL: Has been at Relic for nearly four years, starting out as the lead designer on *Impossible Creatures*. Worked at a number of companies before that such as Monolith, Cavedog and the mighty EA Canada.

2 JONATHAN DOWDESWELL, PRODUCER, RELIC ENTERTAINMENT

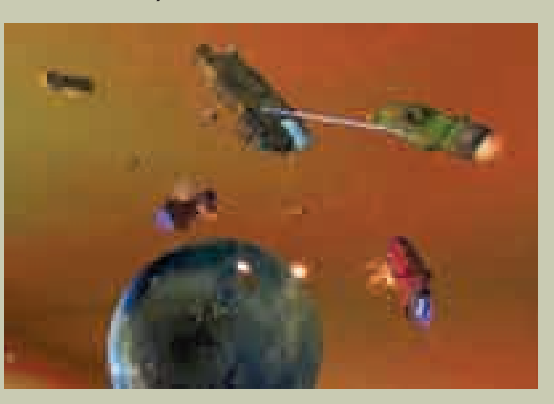
IN A NUTSHELL: Started working in the games industry in 1995 as a tester at EA Canada, moving up the ranks to the position of project co-ordinator for the testing team on *FIFA*. Joined Relic nearly three years ago.

VALUABLE RELICS

With a desire to create quality titles rather than half-baked ideas, it's no surprise that Relic's list of games in the last seven years isn't as long as some studios'. Still, that just means there's less room for error…

HOMEWORLD [PC, 1999]

Relic's first game, *Homeworld*, was an epic example of the real-time strategy genre. Bringing 3D warfare into the realm of outer space, the game attempted to advance the RTS concept by mixing traditional ideas with the vastness of space, allowing your enemies to attack from any direction.



IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES [PC, 2003]

Originally called *Sigma: The Adventures Of Rex Chance, Impossible Creatures* let players create their own cross-breed animals and build an invincible army of mutants with which to decimate their opponents. A free add-on (*Insect Invasion)* appeared soon after release.

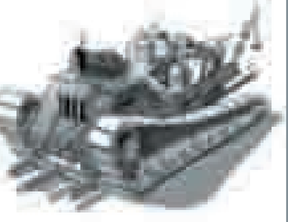


HOMEWORLD 2 [PC, 2003]

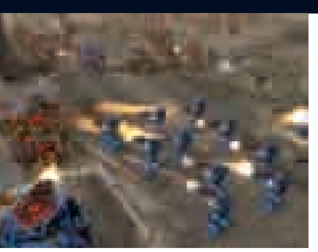
Thanks to PC technology coming on in leaps and bounds since the first *Homeworld* four years earlier, the sequel maintained many of the innovations presented in the original, while taking full advantage of the new-found graphical prowess. The results spoke for themselves and the game has been hugely successful all over the world.









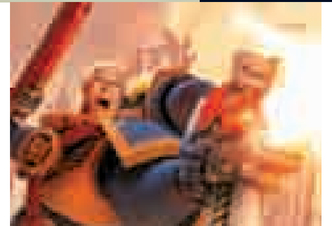
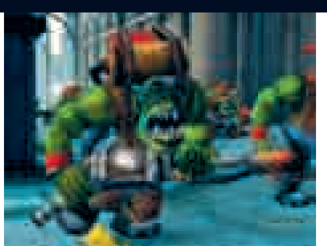
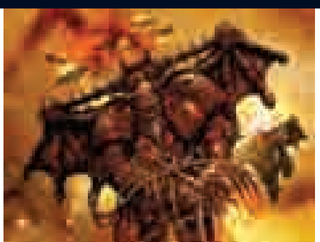
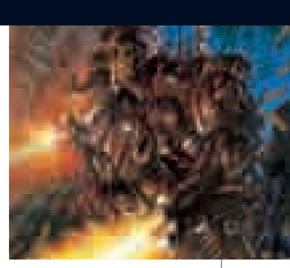




but with *Dawn Of War* and the other projects we currently have in development, the lead designers at Relic worked on establishing a long-term list of goals showing where we wanted to take the RTS genre in five years, not just what the next project should be. When we sign a project, we select the goals that make the most sense and are most achievable and then every project feeds back into that overall plan. This process allows the team to focus more completely on the goals of the project, and feel confident that the months of work when you don't have a game are leading to something really good."

Of course, it's clear from Relic's resumé that its focus is very much on the real-time strategy genre; in its seven-year lifespan, the studio hasn't released any other sort of game. Critics might suggest that restricting itself within such niche boundaries could prove detrimental in the long run, although THQ's recent buyout of Relic at least removes the problem of having to demonstrate a talent for variety to prospective publishers. However, it's a passion for the genre, rather than complacency, that keeps Relic grounded in what it knows best. "Relic started out

As a developer that focuses entirely on PC gaming, Relic has allowed THQ to gain a larger foothold in a market that clearly offers far more opportunity for those willing to take it…

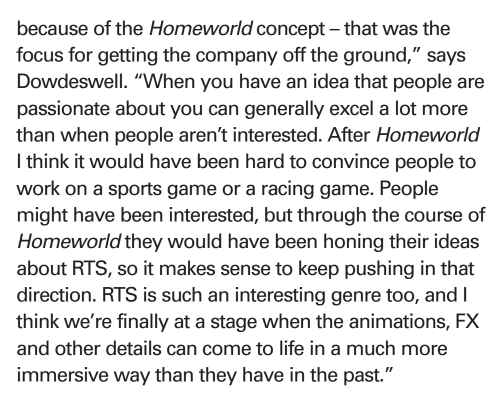
CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

As is often the case with small developers who prove their worth, Relic was bought up in April this year by its most recent publishing associate, THQ. Thankfully, the buyout hasn't had any negative effect on the developer's freedom. "Right from the start it seemed like our goals were in line with each other," says Jonathan Dowdeswell. "We wanted to make great PC RTS games, THQ wanted higher quality titles and to break into PCs. Essentially, the relationship is just cemented that much more now. We feel now like we've still got the same focus and self-direction from before, but we've also got a little more encouragement and more resources. Things that we might have been scared to try before are a bit more possible now… provided we can prove a business case, at least."



While Relic's offices are relatively big, the *Dawn Of War* team is a close-knit group of individuals.

because of the *Homeworld* concept – that was the focus for getting the company off the ground," says Dowdeswell. "When you have an idea that people are passionate about you can generally excel a lot more than when people aren't interested. After *Homeworld* I think it would have been hard to convince people to work on a sports game or a racing game. People might have been interested, but through the course of *Homeworld* they would have been honing their ideas about RTS, so it makes sense to keep pushing in that direction. RTS is such an interesting genre too, and I think we're finally at a stage when the animations, FX and other details can come to life in a much more immersive way than they have in the past."



The worldwide success of *Homeworld* and *Homeworld 2* is more than just a notch on Relic's bedpost – it's given the developer a great deal of leverage when it comes to securing further projects. But a proven track record isn't necessarily a blank cheque as far as development goes, and while Relic's decision to pour all its efforts into a single genre certainly proves useful when coming up with new and exciting ways to take things to the next level, that isn't a guarantee that someone is going to come up with the cash. "New original ideas are easy to get taken seriously – it's the funding that's the hard thing," says Wilson. "The problem is that telling someone about a cool idea has virtually none of the impact of showing them, and showing them requires them to fork over a ton of cash first. The bottom line is that while we're a creative industry, we are still a profit-driven industry. Most original ideas fail – fact. As much as the audience clamours for revolution, they

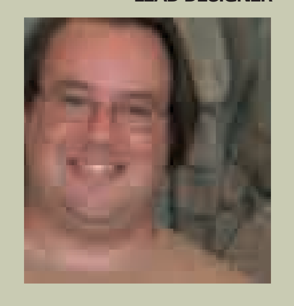
"WHEN YOU HAVE AN IDEA THAT **PEOPLE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT** YOU CAN GENERALLY **EXCEL A LOT MORE** THAN WHEN PEOPLE AREN'T INTERESTED"

don't support it with their dollars; they buy sequels and products in genres they know and enjoy. When considering the investment of millions of dollars you can't really blame publishers for being cautious."

The fact that Relic now finds itself part of a bigger family in the THQ group, as opposed to a small fish in a very large pond, helps give the company plenty of hope for the future. With *Dawn Of War* due towards the end of the year and another title (dubbed 'New Secret Project 4') already well underway, Relic is close to securing its place as a premier RTS developer, and short of an act of God – albeit a demonic one from the world of Warhammer 40,000 – we suspect that speaking the name Relic in the same breath as legendary companies such as Blizzard or Firaxis isn't too far off. "I think Relic is smack dab in the middle of its prime age of creativity and innovation," insists Wilson. "We've been very successful in convincing publishers to get aboard for innovative ideas. *Impossible Creatures* is a great example, and the evolution of RTS gameplay we've done in *Dawn Of War* is another. Do I think it will get better? Yes, because I think THQ's dedication to us will allow us to more fully commit to our goals."

"DAWN OF WAR HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST SATISFYING EXPERIENCES OF MY CAREER. I'VE ALWAYS LOVED MY WORK, BUT NEVER LIKE THIS"

JAY WILSON, LEAD DESIGNER



RELEASE LISTS


Final Fantasy XI PC The biggest console RPG goes all MMO on the WWW


Sniper Elite Multi Rebellion has been taking aim with this one for some time…

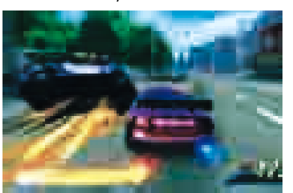

Winning Eleven 8 PS2 Konami continues to make the beautiful game even more so



BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Yes, we're still playing it. No, we're unlikely to stop any time soon. Easily the most accomplished single-player/multiplayer double bill this year, and until *Halo 2* proves us wrong we'll be referring to *Takedown* as 'The reason why Xbox Live was created'.



EVIL GENIUS

Format: PC
Publisher: Vivendi

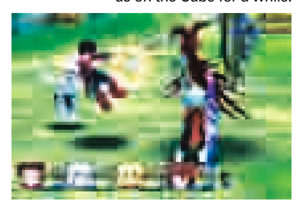
Now, we loved *Dungeon Keeper*, so it stands to reason that we'd fall head over heels for Elixir's latest effort. Play out all of your twisted fantasies and ally yourself with the evil leaders of the world before leaving them for dead and claiming your ultimate prize: exploding monkeys. Oh, and global domination.

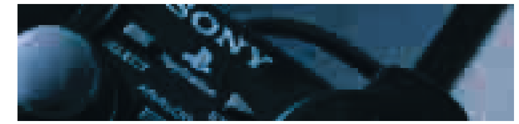


TALES OF SYMPHONIA

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Nintendo

It isn't often that a game comes along that's good enough to force the office to down pads. In fact, now that *Burnout 3* exists, it's unlikely to ever happen again, but Namco's sumptuous RPG is as close as we've seen for many a moon. Hugely pretty and pretty huge too, this will keep us on the Cube for a while.





PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER '04			
10 September	Burnout 3: Takedown	Electronic Arts	Wanted
17 September	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	
17 September	Madden NFL 2005	Electronic Arts	
17 September	Crimson Sea 2	Koei	
17 September	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	Wanted
24 September	Juiced	Acclaim	
24 September	Tiger Woods 2005	Electronic Arts	
24 September	Pilot Down	Dreamcatcher	
24 September	NHL 2005	Electronic Arts	
24 September	Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	Gradius V	Konami	
TBC	FlatOut	Empire	
TBC	Shellshock: Nam '67	Eidos	
TBC	Ribbit King	Atari	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami	
TBC	Second Sight	Codemasters	
TBC	Karaoke Stage	Konami	
TBC	U Move Super Sports	Konami	
TBC	Crisis Zone	Sony	
TBC	Star Wars: Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Colin McRae Rally 2005	Codemasters	
OCTOBER '04			
22 October	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar	Wanted
22 October	Future Tactics	JoWood	
29 October	Rocky Legends	Ubi Soft	
TBC	Killzone	Sony	Wanted
TBC	Dancing Stage Fusion	Konami	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Fight Club	Vivendi	
TBC	EyeToy: Play 2	Sony	
TBC	Get On Da Mic	Eidos	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
TBC	Cold Winter	Vivendi	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	Wanted
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	TOCA Race Driver 2	Codemasters	
TBC	The Bard's Tale	Acclaim	
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry	Vivendi	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	Electronic Arts	
TBC	The Getaway: Black Monday	Sony	
TBC	Prince Of Persia 2	Ubisoft	Wanted
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	
TBC	Gran Turismo 4	Sony	
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Battlefield: Modern Combat	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Jak 3	Sony	
TBC	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	
TBC	Sega Superstars	Sega	
TBC	WWX: Rumble Roses	Konami	
TBC	Ratchet And Clank 3	Sony	
TBC	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Sly 2: Band Of Thieves	Sony	



GAMECUBE

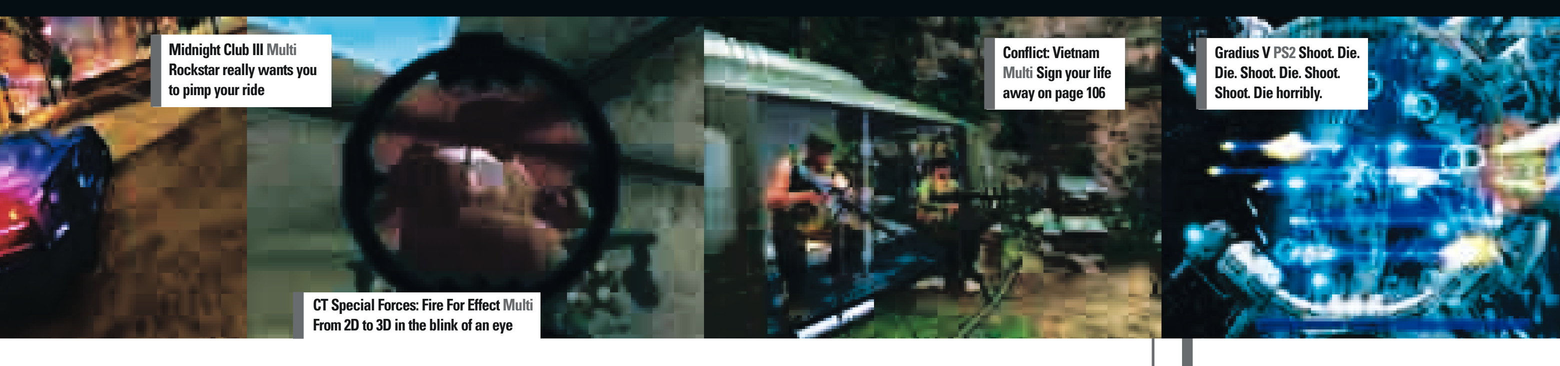
Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER '04			
17 September	Madden NFL 2005	Electronic Arts	
24 September	Animal Crossing	Nintendo	
24 September	Tiger Woods 2005	Electronic Arts	
24 September	NHL 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	WWE: Day Of Reckoning	THQ	
TBC	Ribbit King	Atari	
OCTOBER '04			
09 October	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	Wanted
15 October	Donkey Konga	Nintendo	
22 October	Future Tactics	JoWood	
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	Mario Party 6	Nintendo	
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	
TBC	Paper Mario 2	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Neighbours From Hell	JoWood	
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Zelda: Four Swords Adventure	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Mario Tennis	Nintendo	
TBC	Tales Of Symphonia	Namco	Wanted
TBC	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Metroid Prime 2: Echoes	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Prince Of Persia 2	Ubisoft	Wanted



XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER '04			
10 September	Burnout 3: Takedown	Electronic Arts	Wanted
17 September	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	
17 September	Madden NFL 2005	Electronic Arts	
17 September	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	Wanted

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES



Midnight Club III Multi Rockstar really wants you to pimp your ride

CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect Multi From 2D to 3D in the blink of an eye

Conflict: Vietnam Multi Sign your life away on page 106

Gradius V PS2 Shoot. Die. Die. Shoot. Die. Shoot. Shoot. Die horribly.

Month	Title	Publisher	
24 September	Samurai Warriors	Koei	
24 September	Juice	Acclaim	
24 September	Tiger Woods 2005	Electronic Arts	
24 September	NHL 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	FlatOut	Empire	
TBC	Shellshock: Nam '67	Eidos	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	Second Sight	Codemasters	
TBC	Star Wars: Republic Commando	Activision	
TBC	Star Wars: Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders	Phantagram	
TBC	Colin McRae Rally 2005	Codemasters	
OCTOBER '04			
22 October	Future Tactics	JoWood	
29 October	Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	
TBC	The Bard's Tale	Acclaim	
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry	Vivendi	
TBC	Fable	Microsoft	
TBC	Fight Club	Vivendi	
TBC	Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Ubisoft	
TBC	OutRun 2	SEGA	Wanted
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Metal Slug 3	Ignition	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Halo 2	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	
TBC	Doom 3	Activision	
TBC	Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	
TBC	Forza Motorsport	Microsoft	
TBC	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Battlefield: Modern Combat	Electronic Arts	



PC

Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER '04			
10 September	Myst IV: Revelation	Ubisoft	
17 September	Madden NFL 2005	Electronic Arts	
17 September	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	
17 September	Creature Conflict: The Clan Wars	Cenega	
24 September	The Sims 2	Electronic Arts	Wanted
24 September	Codename: Panzers	Cenega	
24 September	Tiger Woods 2005	Electronic Arts	
24 September	Pilot Down	Dreamcatcher	
24 September	NHL 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	FlatOut	Empire	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	EverQuest II	Ubisoft	
TBC	Star Wars: Republic Commando	Activision	
TBC	Star Wars: Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
OCTOBER '04			
01 October	TrackMania Sunrise	Digital Jesters	
22 October	Future Tactics	JoWood	
29 October	Cossacks 2	CDV	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	
TBC	Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry	Vivendi	
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
TBC	Tribes: Vengeance	Vivendi	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Evil Genius	Vivendi	
TBC	Football Manager 2005	Sega	
TBC	Men Of Valor	Vivendi	
TBC	Advent Rising	Majesco	
TBC	The Matrix Online	Warner Bros	Wanted
TBC	Brothers In Arms	Ubisoft	
TBC	Half-Life 2	Vivendi	
TBC	S.T.A.L.K.E.R.	THQ	Wanted



GAME BOY ADVANCE

Month	Title	Publisher	
SEPTEMBER '04			
17 September	Mario Golf: Advance Tour	Nintendo	
TBC	Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django	Konami	
OCTOBER '04			
01 October	Pokémon Leaf Green	Nintendo	Wanted
01 October	Pokémon Fire Red	Nintendo	Wanted
29 October	Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue	Nintendo	
TBC	Metal Slug Advance	Ignition	Wanted
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Mario Pinball	Nintendo	
TBC	Zelda: The Magical Hood	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Kingdom Hearts: Chain Of Memories	Buena Vista	Wanted
TBC	Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	
TBC	Mario Party Advance	Nintendo	
TBC	Banjo Pilot	THQ	

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. Which is completely beyond our control, so don't get all up in our faces, girlfriend.

gamesTM ON THE HORIZON

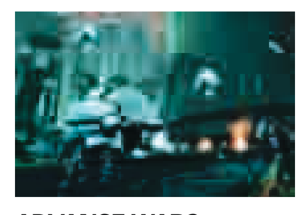
BLACK

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Electronic Arts
With Criterion's glorious racer now finished, the Guildford-based firm can devote its attention to forthcoming shooter *Black*. One of the unsung heroes of E3 (given just how few people got to actually see it), its 2005 release means that details and media are thin on the ground but we can wait, right?



PARIAH

Format: Xbox, PC, PS2
Publisher: HIP Interactive
HIP Interactive has come seemingly out of nowhere with some lovely titles for the next 12 months, one of which is this new first-person shooter from *Unreal* creators Digital Extremes. Naturally, you can expect all the physics and AI you can eat in a huge sci-fi game world. Count us in.



ADVANCE WARS: UNDER FIRE

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Nintendo
Way to go, Nintendo. You farm out one of your finest franchises to an external source and it manages to twist it from strategic genius to a budget-feel *Army Men* clone. So why is it featured here? Because there's still plenty of time for it to be made less horrendous. Pretty please?





THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…

I WANT MY GAMES TV

It's not easy. Making good gaming TV, that is. In fact, I'd much rather work on a magazine. You can choose to buy a mag. You can pick between multiformat kid-speak or hardcore 'I was around when the Spectrum was king and pre-ordered my DS from Tokyo months ago' geekdom.

Not so for the wonderful world of broadcast. For us, there's no such thing as hardcore – the very word is a ratings killer. We have to appeal to the widest demographic, which means toning down the tech speak and showcasing games in jargon-free voice-overs, quick cuts and 'funky' music tracks.

Producers would much rather have Halle Berry and Vin Diesel waxing lyrical about games they've probably never played than see Miyamoto enthusing about Zelda's latest intricacies. Directors complain that the show is running over, and then ask if we really have to cover this 'Halo Too' game for the PS2.

In these days of multi-page internet reviews with gigabytes of media downloads, though, trying to explain the gameplay mechanics of innovative titles like *Under The Skin* in less than two minutes (while using simple language so Aunt Flo will understand what you're going on about) can be hard.

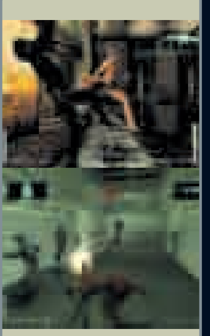
Of course, there are 'hardcore' shows out there, but these are usually relegated to a late-night slot, or air on a cable channel a tiny percentage of the population have access to. It reinforces the suggestion that TV executives just aren't looking for a **games™**-style show; they'd much rather commission *CD:UK* but with games.

Still, there's hope in sight. Soon, the commissioning editors – who, until now, were stodgy geezers who see games as a geek's hobby – will be the young trendies who own PlayStations. Then we can look forward to shows that are as informative as, well, this magazine…

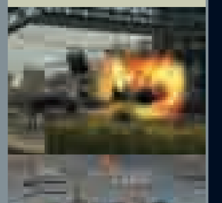
MO RAMZAN
ASSISTANT PRODUCER
GAMEZVILLE

FROM THE FRONT

ATARI FEELS THE PINCH DESPITE (INEXPLICABLY) HIGH SALES OF DRIV3R, WHILE HAVOK GETS A WINDFALL



It looks like there's more *Matrix* cyber-fun on the way.



Driv3r has been a big earner, despite being lame.

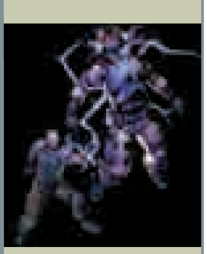
ATARI ENTHUSES ABOUT FUTURE MATRIX TITLES AS NEW FIGURES PROVE LACKLUSTRE

A BITTER BLUE TO SWALLOW

It seems that despite having one of the biggest selling games of the year under its belt – yes, that's *Driv3r* – things aren't as rosy for Atari as you might have thought. Having recently released its figures for the first quarter (running from April to June) of the 2004-05 financial year, it looks like the downturn in profits seen in the whole of the previous fiscal year has continued into this one. Revenue on all sales dropped over $40 million from $151.4 million to $110.3 million while profits were practically halved, dropping a massive $11.7 million to just $12.1 million. While this is still a substantial sum of money, such a slump must prove painful on the French publisher's wallet.

Of course, it's no surprise that Atari has already managed to attribute the decrease to things other than poor performance. Looking back to the same period last year, for example, it's no secret that *Enter The Matrix* (despite being a disappointing game) helped to bolster the company's sales considerably, and with no similarly large-budget release made between April and June this year, a decline in sales was only to be expected. That several popular Atari titles have hit the shelves in the last few months – specifically *Driv3r* and *Transformers* – should at least guarantee some kind of improvement, despite predictions of a further $19 million loss in the second quarter.

Nevertheless, the disappointing figures combined with the loss of the *Unreal* franchise to Midway hasn't stopped Atari from bouncing back with its next big line of releases – more *Matrix* titles. With an



Games will be even better looking now that Havok's had a payday.



THE HAVOK CONTINUES

PHYSICS EXPERT LOOKS TO EXPAND FOR THE FUTURE

With its latest physics engine gaining respect throughout the industry, middleware developer Havok has acquired funding that will allow it to expand its work. The company, which is responsible for the Havok 2 engine that powers the likes of *Half-Life 2*, *Psi-Ops* and *Full Spectrum Warrior*, has secured investment from several European financial institutions. With this backing, Havok plans to enhance its award-winning technology and launch new products into the middleware market.

"Havok is investing significantly in the development of its next-generation middleware solutions," said Steve Collins, chief technical officer at Havok. "The Havok product line will be expanded, adding a new asset-producing pipeline, a new revolutionary physics engine and a new middleware product which will allow game developers to raise the character animation and dynamics bar for next-generation games."

PILL

announcement due any time now regarding brand new games based on the Wachowskis' licence (the same one that has lost much of its sparkle since the last two films of the trilogy turned out to be less than stellar), the company obviously still sees milk in the franchise's udders. We just hope for Atari's sake that gamers are willing to drink it after the last offering proved somewhat sour.

NET REVENUE ($ MILLION)

- Quarter One (April-June) 2003: $151.4 million
- Quarter One (April-June) 2004: $110.3 million

NET PROFITS ($ MILLION)

- Quarter One (April-June) 2003: $23.8 million
- Quarter One (April-June) 2004: $12.1 million

UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Doom 3	Activision	PC
2	Spider-Man 2	Activision	Multi
3	Athens 2004	SCEE	PS2
4	Driv3r	Atari	Multi
5	The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay	Vivendi	Xbox
6	Need For Speed Underground	EA Games	Multi
7	Shrek 2	Activision	Multi
8	Formula 1 04	SCEE	PS2
9	FIFA 2004	EA Sports	Multi
10	The Sims: Bustin' Out	EA Games	Multi

Not much of a change in the pecking order this month (well, it is the traditionally quiet season), although it's nice to see the PC-only *Doom 3* sweeping into the top of the multiformat chart. Of course, we're surprised that *Driv3r*'s still hanging in there…

All information is compiled by ChartTrack and is the strict copyright of ELSPA (UK) Ltd. UK Entertainment Software Sales Charts (All Formats) (w/e 14 August 2004)



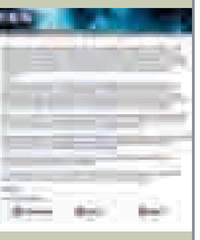
3, 2, 1… TIME'S UP

SOFTWARE FIRM FOLDS AMID PIRACY ALLEGATIONS

It has been revealed that 321 Studios, the US firm responsible for software tools such as DVDXCopy and GamesXCopy, has had to close following legal pressure from a number of publishers. Injunctions were served by three US federal courts earlier this year (see **games™** 21) after lawsuits were brought against the company by publishers such as Atari and Electronic Arts who insisted that the programs developed by 321 Studios, which allow users to create back-up copies of software, breached the Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

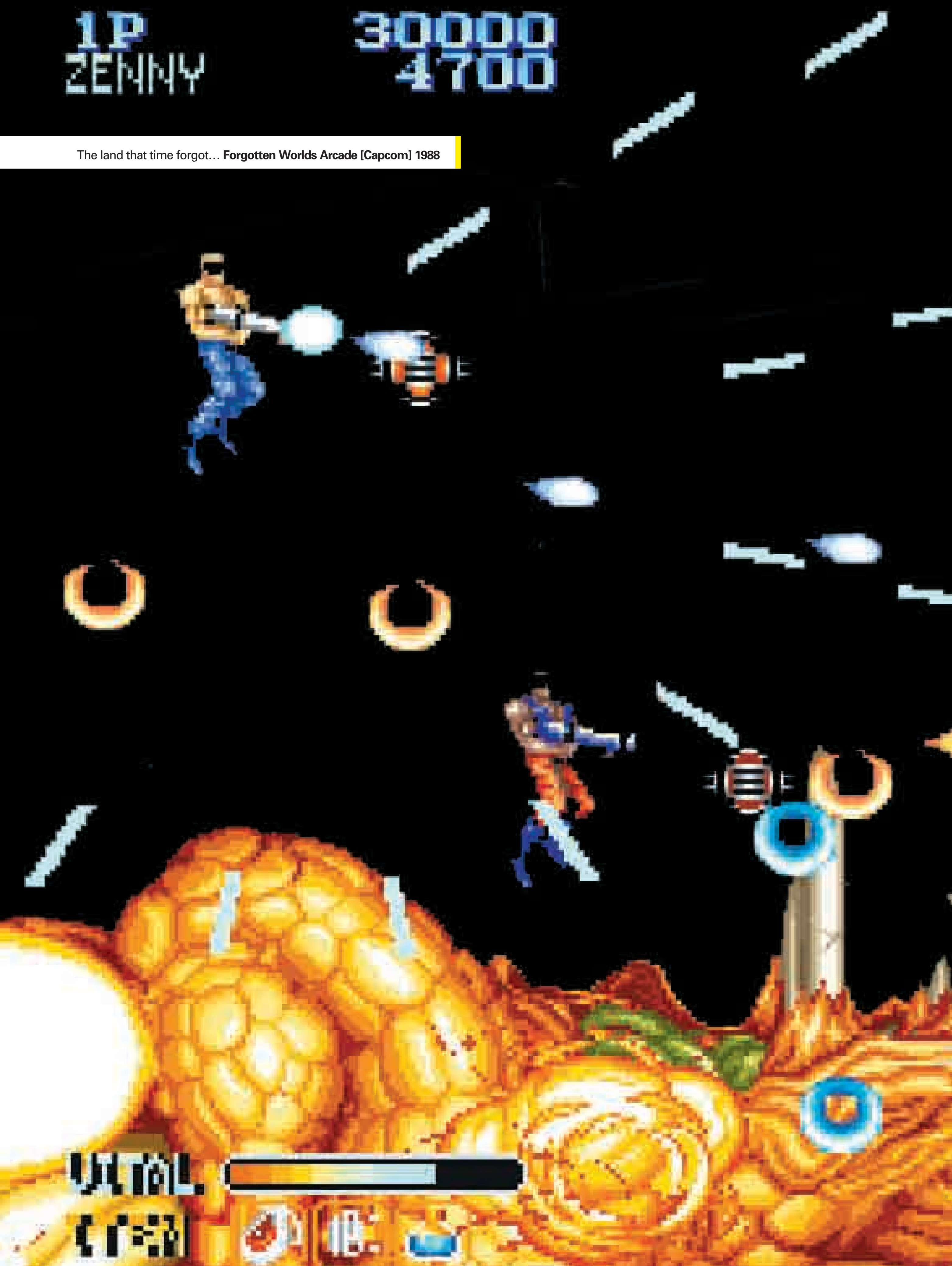
Not surprisingly, many are hailing the company's closure as a success in the battle against software piracy and, to a degree, they may be right. However, when you consider that we all have every right to create back-up copies of any software that we legally own, there's also a very strong argument that publishers could be breaching the rights of consumers by building high-level copy protection systems into their products.

Either way, the death of 321 Studios will become another notch on the bedpost of anti-piracy protestors everywhere.



Worries over bootlegging have driven 321 Studios to shut up shop.





The land that time forgot… **Forgotten Worlds Arcade [Capcom] 1988**


2P
ZENNY
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4900
VITAL

HALO 2



"WE DON'T WANT TO SPOIL THE SURPRISE…"

PETE PARSONS, STUDIO MANAGER, BUNGIE

■ The vehicles have full damage effects – hit them enough and they'll explode.

■ The Banshee controls have been tweaked to prevent hovering…

■ The effects on show here are lovely, even if they are just pure window dressing.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Developer Bungie reached fame with the creation of *Marathon*, a stunning demonstration of first-person genius. From there the developer went on to deliver *Oni* and then *Halo*, the game that put the name Bungie in the dreams of every single person who owns an Xbox.

HISTORY

- **HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED** 2002 [Xbox]
- **ONI** 2001 [PS2]
- **MARATHON** 1994 [Mac]

THE END OF THE WORLD IS DEFINITELY NIGH

Fact: this sequel to the award-winning Xbox launch title has been one of the most anticipated titles in the history of gaming, ever since the day Microsoft announced its development. If you're in any doubt about this possibility, consider this: many game stores around the country (nay, the globe) have already stopped taking pre-orders for *Halo 2*. That's how popular it is already. Make no mistake about it – Bungie's upcoming opus may be due to come out on 11 November, but you can be sure that getting hold of it on that date won't be easy.

Of course, we don't need to tell you how much of a tragedy it would be if you did end up being one of the unlucky ones who misses out on the event. All those people all over the world, your friends, family, pet dog… all playing *Halo 2*. Without you. Worse still, everyone's going to be able to play this game on Xbox Live, and it's the multiplayer side of the game (rather than the highly-secretive single-player adventure) that Bungie is eager to show off in the run-up to the game's launch. Having played it, we can understand why.

The multiplayer in *Halo* was certainly good, but it never managed to quite reach the likes of *Unreal*, *Quake* or *Rainbow Six*. Sure, there were plenty of maps, weapons and even modes to chose from but the truth remains that the game's potential was never fully realised on the multiplayer front. This was partly due to the lack of online play, but also because the majority of the maps were far too basic. Thankfully, both of these problems have been solved for *Halo 2*, along with other niggles too.

Quite simply, playing the *Halo 2* multiplayer modes is a delight, not least because you can now 'be' the Covenant. So much work has gone into this side of the game that it's easy to see where the release delays have come from. The first feature you'll notice is the slightly improved control system. Don't worry – Bungie hasn't changed too much, but you will find everything a lot smoother this time, as well as the new dual-wielding feature. When this was announced, Bungie gave the example of using a Plasma Pistol to deplete a shield before following up with another weapon to finish the job. It's a fine example, but let's be honest – the fact that you can hold two guns at the same time isn't the most original feature. Nevertheless, being able to throw more firepower into the fight certainly comes in handy during the more frantic moments of action.

That's not to say the game is made too easy if you have two death-spewing toys in your palms – recoil, for one, tends to ruin accuracy. Dual-wielding can be activated easily through the Y button and you'll find yourself switching in and out of this firing mode depending on the situation. As fun as it is to let off steam with two guns, though, it's not always the most productive plan of action with Bungie taking a lot of time balancing play in this respect. Choose dual-wielding and as well as accuracy you also sacrifice grenade use.

We dread to think how many hours of playtesting this game has gone through, although around 8,000 people are apparently beta testing at the moment. The results so far are fantastic, and we ▷

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

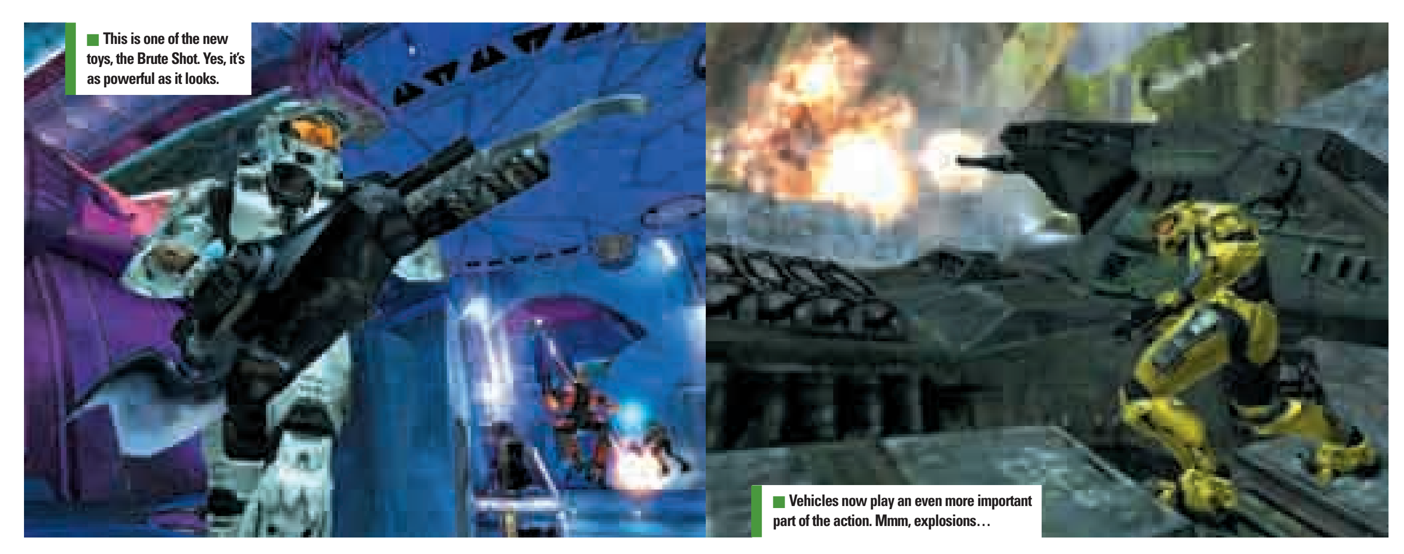
Information on the one-player campaign is very hard to come by and Bungie either has some fantastic tale to hide or some equally fantastic gameplay features. Either way, the developer is remaining very tight lipped about it all. In fact, the only source of information on the story at the moment has been through an alternative reality game currently running on www.ilovebees.com. Visit the site and you'll find all kinds of weird happenings to do with a queen, a flea, a spider and the end of the world. Spend time there and it will start to make sense, honest. However, you can save yourself weeks of work by just going to http://bees.netninja.com/wiki to read a regularly updated guide.

> "THE NUMBER OF GAME MODES SET TO APPEAR IN HALO 2 IS QUITE STAGGERING"

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Bungie
RELEASE: 11 Nov (US: 9 Nov)
GENRE: First-Person Shooter
PLAYERS: 1-16

■ The Covenant forces have taken Earth, creating the perfect arena for an epic single-player story and endless multiplayer madness.



■ This is one of the new toys, the Brute Shot. Yes, it's as powerful as it looks.

■ Vehicles now play an even more important part of the action. Mmm, explosions…

HALO 2 CONT.

never felt one player was dominating because of the tools rather than their skill. Sadly this means some classic *Halo* guns (like the Marine Pistol) have been made less powerful while others (such as the Needler) have been upgraded. Any differences here shouldn't annoy. As far as damage goes, the multiplayer game feels somewhere between *Rainbow Six* and *Unreal*; in other words, the kills come thick and fast, but not so quickly that you're left frustrated after a death, wondering what the hell just happened.

That's not to say there aren't some powerful weapons that every player is going to be scrambling after. The Rocket Launcher and the Plasma Sword, for example, can deliver quick justice, as can two newly shown weapons, the Covenant Carbine and the Brute Shot. The first of these is a one-shot, slow reload rifle not dissimilar to the Rail Gun in *Quake*, while the second gun is a semi-automatic rifle that fires small explosive rounds. Land a couple of these on or near your target and it usually guarantees a kill.

If you're worried about getting your ass handed to you on a plate by all manner of experts, you'll be pleased to hear about the online ranking system that allows you to opti-search for players of a similar skill. It's pretty standard fare for an Xbox Live game nowadays, although the lobby system here is somewhat different. Bungie has created what it calls a Party system, so now you and a group of friends can sit in a sort of sub-lobby known as the Party Area. From here you can send out invites (with attached voice messages) for others to join you, search for active game servers or host your own. This means you don't need to break up your unit of friends when flitting between servers which, as those with experience of *Rainbow Six 3* will tell you, is a superb idea.

There are also a whole load of customisation options on the front end of the lobby to ensure that you can have whatever you want, whenever you want it. The number of game modes set to appear in *Halo 2* is quite staggering; a lot of old faces (like Oddball, Juggernaut and so on) are available along with plenty of new modes. Of course, the focus is very much on team games – one new mode, for

"IT'S NOT HARD TO SEE WHERE THE RELEASE DELAYS HAVE COME FROM"

instance, is a variation on the bomb game seen in *Counter-Strike*.

The variety of maps built for the multiplayer is fantastic and, as we mentioned earlier, the design is well thought through. There's a good mix of interior and outdoor levels, the vehicle use is balanced, and possibilities for multi-pronged team attacks are extensive. Most importantly of all, every map we played was instantly memorable. Specific landmarks and the like made basic navigation simple – a feature that is pretty much necessary for success with an online game. Map favourites will no doubt emerge but we'd be surprised if *Halo 2* includes a map that you don't want to play.

We're sure you don't need convincing of this game's worth and, for notoriety alone, *Halo 2* is going to sit comfortably at the top of the charts for a very long time. That said, there's no doubt that an Xbox Live account is an absolute necessity if you want to get the most out of the game. You may get to save the Earth in the single-player campaign, but online you can destroy it…

TALK TALK

To emphasise the importance of the multiplayer side of this game, Microsoft is releasing a new *Halo 2* Xbox Live headset at the same time as the game – and it will no doubt sell like the very hottest of cake-like products. As well as looking a lot prettier than the current first-party headset, the new unit is designed to be a lot more comfortable to wear and won't break after a few weeks of play – something the current headset is quite prone to do unless you're particularly careful with it. What's more, the redesign has allowed Microsoft to include some fancy new technology that helps to cut down on background interference and white noise.



■ We played a few games with 16 players and didn't notice any signs of restrictive slowdown.

PUBLISHER PROFILE

First-party publisher Microsoft has been around long enough now to release what you might call an eclectic range of games – it was releasing games on the PC long before the idea for the Xbox was even a glint in Bill Gates' eye. From quality titles like *Halo* to 'poorer' games like *Azurik*, it's done it all…

HISTORY

- **SUDEKI** 2004 [Xbox]
- **CRIMSON SKIES** 2003 [Xbox]
- **PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2** 2003 [Xbox]



Of course, the big question on everyone's lips is which side is going to be more popular.

The Plasma Sword is as deadly as it was in the first game, only this time you get to pick it up…

"HALO 2 IS ONE OF THE MOST ANTICIPATED GAMES ON ANY CONSOLE"

STEPHEN MCGILL, HEAD OF UK XBOX PR, MICROSOFT

FINAL FANTASY XII



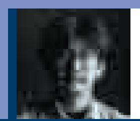
"OUR DESIGNERS HAVE VISITED MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES LIKE TURKEY AND GREECE TO MAKE THE BACKGROUNDS MORE REALISTIC"

YASUMI MATSUNO, PRODUCER, SQUARE ENIX

■ As 'nice' as these guys look while static, the animation is quite simply something else.

■ The variety of characters is every bit as impressive as you'd expect from Square Enix.

■ No more random battles, you say? Can it even be called *Final Fantasy* any more?



COMPOSER PROFILE

Born in Kouchi City, Japan, in 1959, Nobuo Uematsu never received any formal tuition on his way to the top of the composition food chain. Having worked on *Final Fantasys I* though *IX* (not to mention countless other titles as well as film and TV work), Uematsu-san's portfolio puts many other modern composers to shame.

HISTORY

- **FINAL FANTASY VII** 1997 [PSone]
- **CHRONO TRIGGER** 1995 [SNES]
- **FINAL FANTASY I** 1989 [NES]

YES, BUT WILL THE SEQUEL BE CEL-SHADED?

PS2 **While the boundaries of the RPG genre are being tugged in all directions, there are some things you can always rely on.** For every *KOTOR*, *Deus Ex: Invisible War* or *Disgaea*, we're treated to an equal number of more traditional RPGs. You know the type – predictable characters and storyline, with gameplay that's been grown ivy-like around a sequence of lengthy and over-the-top cut-scenes. That's not to say that this is a bad thing – games like *Xenosaga Episode 1* and *Wild Arms 3* follow the Dungeon Master's Guide to the letter, and they're still both great titles within their field. But be it due to developer arrogance or purely a reflection of the genre's demographic, evolution within the traditional RPG category is usually limited. Which is why we're shocked to discover not only a massive shake-up, but to find it's been caused by Square Enix, a firm many would consider too entrenched in what it does so well to change now…

Regardless, *Final Fantasy* fans will be delighted to hear that *XII* is very much a return to glory after more adventurous titles – *X-2* was predominantly a fan-service disc and *XI* is Square's venture into the online scene, a move that has paid off although the game has had to distance itself from the rest of the series. There's only so much distancing to be done, though; it's apparent that Square Enix has learned much from its online exploration as many elements from the world of MMORPGs have been taken on board for this strictly offline adventure.

MUSIC SOUNDS BETTER WITH YOU

Music can really make or break a game, and Square's soundtrack pedigree isn't something to be messed with. *Final Fantasy* followers will welcome the return of Nobuo Uematsu, who wrote the game's main theme (which, we have on good authority, has had such an impact on development that it has affected the game's plot), while Hitoshi Sakimoto will make sure your ears are treated as well as your eyes. Thrown-together soundtracks are all well and good but as the use of Faye Wong's 'Eyes On Me' at a pivotal moment in *Final Fantasy VIII* highlights, dedicated composers and artists will always have a place in game development.

This game comes closer to real-time combat than previous instalments, and by taking big steps off the well-trodden *Final Fantasy* path, *XII* will give both the genre and series a much needed shot in the arm.

The game takes place in Ivalice – it's the same world as the *Final Fantasy Tactics* games but the developer is keen to point out that there will be no familiar faces here as the events take place at different times. "Each of the *Final Fantasy* series is an individual game," explains Yasumi Matsuno, *XII*'s producer. "There'll be no references to any of the *Final Fantasy* series." However, RPGers will be appeased with plenty of the series' staples, such as Moogles, mages and a high chance of a character being called Cid.

One major change is the loss of the by-now familiar random battles – the days of being jumped by a pack of bizarre creatures as you stroll across the plains are over. "We have eliminated the borderline between battle and field in favour of a seamless transition from exploration to battle," Matsuno-san says, so there'll be no more screen-shattering effects as you cut to Generic Battle Location 7. Taking a leaf out of the *Breath Of Fire: Dragon Quarter* book, enemies will be visible in the game field and will react to your character based on sight, sound and smell rather than charging you indiscriminately. "This creates an intensive environment where the player has to decide whether to avoid monsters or to fight them," Matsuno-san continues, going on to say that it adds reality to the whole system: "Usually people don't randomly attack you when you walk through a field."

Aside from a better-integrated combat system (which makes the game feel unlike any previous *Final Fantasy* title), you'd be hard-pressed not to notice a massive shift

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: TBC
DEVELOPER: Square Enix
RELEASE: 2005
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

Looking to silence critics of *Final Fantasy X* and build the reputation of the respected series further still, *FFXII* is yet another hundred-hour journey through a gorgeously realised world.

"ENEMIES WILL BE VISIBLE IN THE GAME FIELD AND WILL REACT TO YOU BASED ON SIGHT, SOUND AND SMELL"



Many *Final Fantasy* traditions continue. Bosses, for example, never fail to impress.

FINAL FANTASY XII CONT.

in visual style. The *FFX*/*FFX-2* look gives way to what reminds us very much of one of Square's most overlooked titles, the sublime *Vagrant Story* (hardly surprising – Matsuno-san has worked on both games), and distancing this latest release from Yuna's double bill is clearly a priority. "We don't have any rules that make one designer the overall designer for the entire series," Matsuno-san explains. "Our art designers have visited Mediterranean countries such as Turkey and Greece to make the backgrounds more realistic and to distinguish [them] from previous *Final Fantasy* games." And with these well-populated continental locales and the impressive new emotive facial animations (on top of Square's already astronomical production values), this could well be the most impressive *Final Fantasy* yet.

But it wouldn't be *Final Fantasy* if there wasn't a unique and complex underlying system to get your head around – *FFVII*'s Materia system being the most ingenious of these thus far for our Gil – so *Final Fantasy* gluttons will be pleased to hear about *XII*'s Gambit system. We're told there will be ten classes of Gambit, each with its own array of variations on a theme, and by bestowing them on characters you'll alter the battle attitudes and strategies of your group. Some will make party members copy the leader while others will allow for more complex manoeuvres such as ranged attacks and defensive or support skills.

Like Materia, you'll find Gambits in all the usual locations. Curiously positioned chests, corpses of felled foes and important quest events will all yield these useful items and we'd gladly put money on there being several hard-to-find yet revoltingly powerful Gambits that many of us will only track down thanks to a scarily in-depth FAQ written by a 13-year-old American kid in his bedroom. The shame.

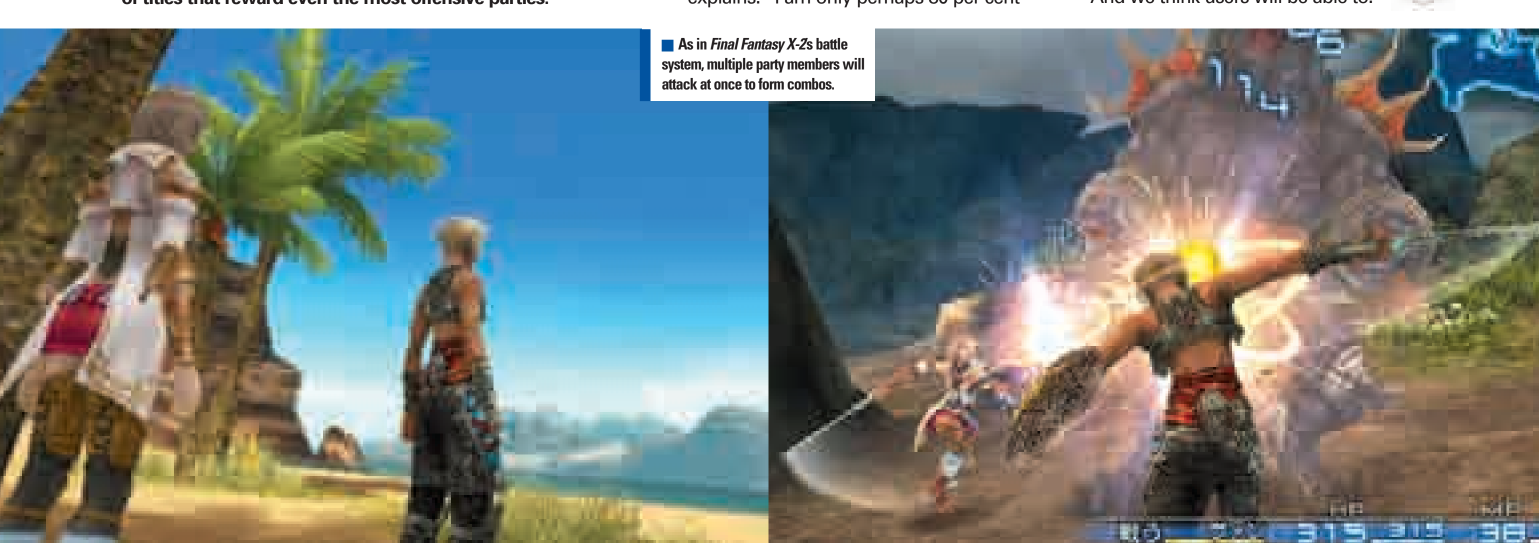
For all the innovation that *XII* promises, Matsuno-san isn't happy with the game… yet. "Since the game is incomplete, I am not yet satisfied with anything," he explains. "I am only perhaps 80 per cent satisfied with any of it." But if the title looks this good already and it's not even finished, we're very eager to get our hands on completed code. We're also informed that the final product will feature support for the PS2 HDD, allowing some degree of installation to speed up loading times and allow game saves. There's still no word on when this much-delayed 'peripheral' will hit UK shelves, though, so such improvements may well be lost on us lowly PAL gamers.

Reports from E3 pretty much agreed with ours – it's *Final Fantasy*, Cid, but not as we know it. Taking elements from several other genres to breathe life into one that's stagnating is undoubtedly a brave move on the part of Square Enix, but from what we've seen it's probably the best thing to happen to the series since Amano-san scribbled down his first sketch of Cloud Strife. But for the closing gambit, as it were, we'll refer you to producer Matsuno-san for his vision of the game. "Like the reality experienced by viewers watching *The Lord Of The Rings*, so would we like for players to experience a reality in *Final Fantasy XII* as well. And we think users will be able to."

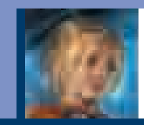
"REPORTS FROM E3 AGREED WITH OUR THOUGHTS ON THE GAME – IT'S FINAL FANTASY, CID, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT"

CAST OF THOUSANDS

After the three-girl bonanza of *Final Fantasy X-2*, many players have yearned for a selection of characters from which to pick their perfect posse. Fortunately, *XII* reportedly has a plentiful supply of characters from which to draft the perfect squad; and from what we've seen of the Gambit system and battles, there'll be plenty of room for experimentation in doing so. Ranged attackers have been made far more useful than they tend to be, and strategy plays a much bigger part here than it has in an RPG for some time. It will be interesting to see how the balancing of the final game counteracts the worrying trend of titles that reward even the most offensive parties.



As in *Final Fantasy X-2*'s battle system, multiple party members will attack at once to form combos.



SERIES PROFILE

Since their introduction in the days of the Famicom, the *Final Fantasy* games have risen up through the RPG ranks and now represent one of the biggest franchises in the genre. Even branching out into strategy and adventure titles hasn't stifled Square Enix's seminal series, which continues to go from strength to strength.

HISTORY

- FINAL FANTASY X-2 2004 [PS2]
- FINAL FANTASY TACTICS 1998 [PSone]
- FINAL FANTASY 1989 [NES]

Square Enix is particularly keen to highlight the game's superb facial animations.

We await the arrival of any kind of English language version. Please, oh please…

"THE STORY ISN'T ALL THAT'S NEW – EXPERIENCE AN EVOLVED BATTLE SYSTEM WITH NUMEROUS FEATURES NEVER BEFORE SEEN IN THE FINAL FANTASY SERIES"
SQUARE ENIX PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

A MÉNAGE À TROIS OF FANTASIES

FINAL FANTASY XI + VAGRANT STORY ÷ FINAL FANTASY TACTICS = FINAL FANTASY XII

Wave goodbye to rendered backdrops – full 3D is here at last. It's about time too…

EVIL GENIUS



Come on, you wouldn't hit an old woman wearing glasses would you?

"EVIL GENIUS DELIVERS SOMETHING REALLY FRESH IN TERMS OF STYLE AND CONTENT"

DEMIS HASSABIS, CEO, ELIXIR STUDIOS

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

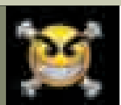
NOT FOR CONTROL FREAKS

DUNGEON KEEPER - ABSOLUTE CONTROL + CRIMINAL MASTERMIND = EVIL GENIUS

Booby-trapping your base is essential for keeping out the pesky forces of good.

Broadcasting your threats to a trembling global population is what being evil is all about.

EVIL GENIUS
PC

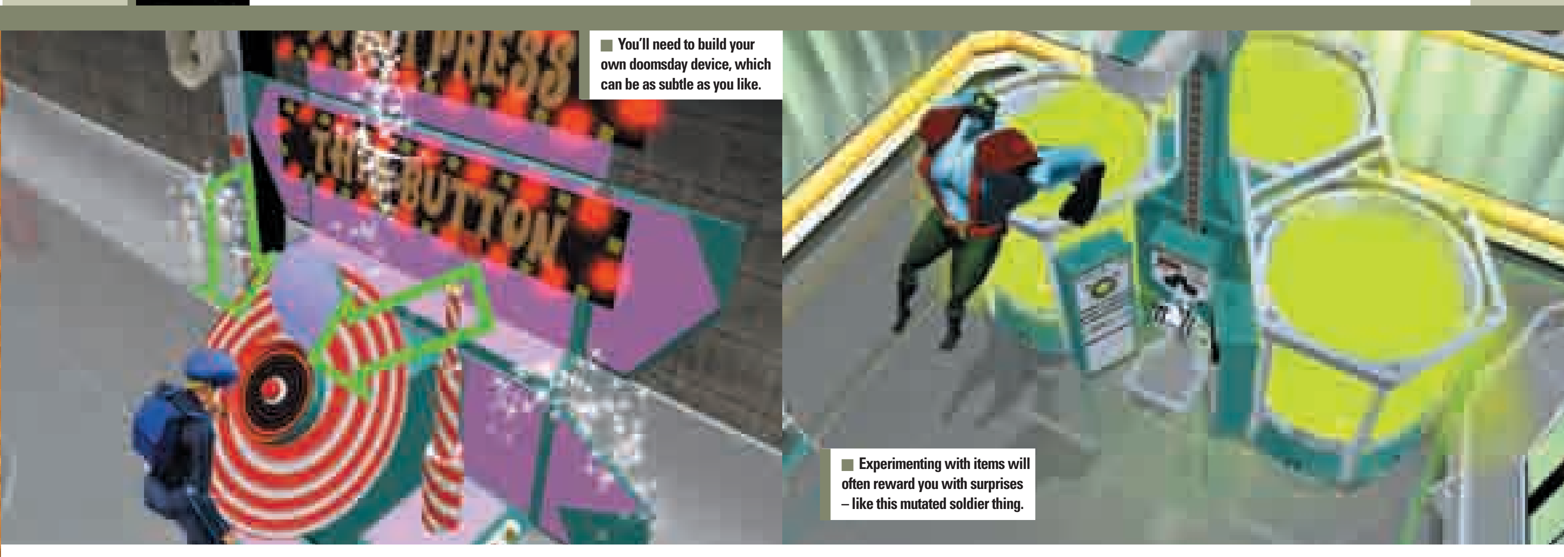


EVIL PROFILE

Evil's been around since the beginning of time and can take almost any form imaginable. From that nasty little serpent that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden through to modern-day super-villains like Bowser and Dr Octopus. Let's face it – evil is here to stay.

HISTORY

- **TEAM ROCKET** POKÉMON BLUE/RED (1997)
- **KING K. ROOL** DONKEY KONG COUNTRY (1994)
- **JANKEN THE GREAT** ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD (1986)



You'll need to build your own doomsday device, which can be as subtle as you like.

Experimenting with items will often reward you with surprises – like this mutated soldier thing.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Vivendi
DEVELOPER: Elixir Studios
RELEASE: Oct '04
GENRE: Real-Time Strategy
PLAYERS: 1

Global domination is the name of the game. Recruit your henchmen, design your lair and raise your notoriety level until you're considered a criminal mastermind.

AH, MR GENIUS – WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU…

Everyone's got an evil streak. Some, like us, have a little more than a streak, more of an evil slab. It's this part of a person that causes them to pull the legs and wings off flies then balance the raisin-like body atop a currant bun (okay, maybe that's just us). More innocently, it's the bit inside us that always cheered on the bad guy, wanted the 007 villain to do away with the irritatingly suave Meeester Bond, and has always dreamt of the day when Wile E. Coyote finally devours that roadrunner.

Evil Genius is planning to play on this secret craving for villainy by putting you in charge of setting up and running your own evil empire with a view to taking over the planet. The formula is a simple one: use your ill-gotten cash to fill your lair with rooms, traps and minion-pleasing bits of tat; expand your influence and notoriety by performing acts of evil; and finally build an over-the-top doomsday device and barter with the world powers until they either hand over a ridiculous sum or you're forced to unleash your wrath by means of a big red button.

Yeah, we know what you're thinking, the similarities between this and the *Dungeon Keeper* series are obvious, and at first glance the titles look near identical. Fortunately, after a few minutes' play on the few levels of *Evil Genius*'s preview code, we found them to be very different games. The key difference is the fact that you won't be directly in control of your minions. Rather than being able to select individuals to perform tasks, any henchmen you have in your service will carry out your will depending on what equipment they have access to and what's going on around them.

Controlling things by influence like this rather than a direct click-and-move will make planning ahead essential as unmotivated employees will just wander around and watch as the Russian Special Forces infiltrate your base, hack all your computers and generally make a mess of your lovingly crafted hive of evil. That said, despite this lack of direct influence, you still feel very much in control. Clever stuff.

The exceptions to this rule will be your loyal henchmen. Every criminal mastermind needs at least one right-hand man and you won't be disappointed with your choices. From a mace-wielding old lady through to a big-game safari hunter who throws exploding-monkey grenades, new henchmen will become available to you as your infamy spreads across the globe. These henchmen will play a key role in your plans as they'll be your main means of defence against the forces of good and the only characters that you can actually order around.

Evil Genius is looking very impressive graphically, is armed with a funky mid-Sixties musical score and the whole package is dripping with humorous clichés. Tanks full of flesh-hungry piranhas awaiting the taste of English spies, ingenious means of interrogation that involve cymbals and Michael Jackson's dance routines, and the ability to make full use of your evil cackle and gloat over imprisoned enemies all help to make this title look and feel very stylish.

We have to say that this is all looking really promising and if the finished game is up to the high standard of the part we've been playing, then there's plenty here to get excited about. We're almost tempted to nip out and buy a fluffy white cat and a swivelling black leather armchair in anticipation.

"THIS GAME BOASTS INGENIOUS INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES THAT INVOLVE MICHAEL JACKSON'S DANCE ROUTINES"

BWAHAHAHA

In order to promote yourself to the status of super villain, earning the right to travel to a second island and create your volcano base and doomsday device, you'll have to perform acts of infamy all over the globe. These tasks can take any form – from kidnapping people to shrinking famous monuments – and you'll need to decide which missions to undertake then assign the necessary minions to the job. This will lend an extra element of strategy to the game, as when your minions are away from the base you're left short-staffed and vulnerable. Doing evil deeds means you can persuade other criminal overlords to join your crusade, earn the respect of new henchmen and pick up items that will boost your minions' stats.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS



■ Just because it's dark, doesn't mean the cops won't be able to find you. Damn those choppers.

■ Watcha gonna do, watcha gonna do when they come for you? *San Andreas*'s cops are pretty mean.

"SAN ANDREAS WILL REDEFINE THE GRAND THEFT AUTO SERIES AND REVOLUTIONISE OPEN-ENDED GAMEPLAY"
LESLIE BENZIES, PRESIDENT, ROCKSTAR NORTH

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

BIGGER AND BADDER

GTA: VICE CITY - THE EIGHTIES x LONG DISTANCES = GTA: SAN ANDREAS



DEVELOPER PROFILE

As well as producing *Grand Theft Auto III, Vice City* and now *San Andreas*, Rockstar North also developed *Manhunt*, the grizzly snuff-'em-up that's recently stirred up all manner of media controversy and, as such, features heavily in certain other parts of this magazine…

HISTORY

- **MANHUNT** 2003 [PS2]
- **GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY** 2002 [PS2]
- **GRAND THEFT AUTO III** 2001 [PS2]



Get yourself a tattoo and you'll be the talk of the town among the most fashionable gang members.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
DEVELOPER: Rockstar North
RELEASE: 22 Oct '04
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Steal cars, rob people, murder prostitutes and eat burgers in the biggest *Grand Theft Auto* game yet. *GTA San Andreas* spans a whole state five times the size of Vice City. Getting lost could be an issue…

A WHOLE WORLD OF VIOLENCE – LITERALLY

This is it. This is the big one. This is the game millions are waiting for. *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* is the next in line to give us such treats as swearing, weapons, murder, radio stations, prostitutes (that we can 'romance' before killing in order to get our money back) and, of course, lots and lots of car-jacking – the crucial, central element that captured our hearts and minds to begin with. But that's not all. As you should rightly expect, *GTA: San Andreas* has much more up its sleeve.

Since our preview last issue, we've learned a bit more about our main guy, CJ. As well as knowing about his desire for food and ability to turn portly, we now know his story. Instead of being one of the usual *GTA* wannabe gangsters, eager to climb the ladder of crime, CJ is a good guy. Well, he starts the game trying to be good. You see, CJ left the gritty, murderous neighbourhoods of Los Santos in an effort to lead a decent, quiet life. However, when his mother was murdered, he was framed for homicide upon his return to his 'hood, forcing him into a world of crime in order to survive.

As well as further story details, we've also been shown much more of the actual game, with Rockstar taking us on a tour of *San Andreas*, showing us the countryside, the small towns and a few of the vehicles used to get around the rougher terrain (such as quad- and motor bikes and big off-road pick-ups). It was beautiful; the only thing missing was a picnic in one of the massive fields. The countryside is vast and you can literally go anywhere, even up huge mountains. In what is a standout technical achievement, we were able to approach a huge mountain, visible from many miles away, and drive our way up and around its winding road without ever having to wait while its close-up detail was loaded. Once we reached the top we were able to see for miles and look down into the town below, truly realising the scale of the game.

Grand Theft Auto III and *Vice City* are nowhere near the size and depth of *San Andreas*'s environment. With more development time and a larger team, Rockstar has been able to produce this epic landscape, while also upping the standard of the detail within. And what's more, there are no loading times anywhere – it's entirely possible to drive right the way through San Andreas without ever having your adventure interrupted. This isn't advisable as it would take you ages, but it is possible.

The difference between the inner city and the countryside sections isn't only apparent in the surroundings, but the people are markedly different too. Replacing the inner city's thugs, gang members and suited city slickers are countryside hick villagers and shirtless tramps. There's even a token lardy small-town sheriff wandering the streets too.

So much of *San Andreas* is being kept a secret, yet there is so much to get excited about. We've seen the sprawling landscapes and the diverse scenery within – from gritty inner-city areas featuring groups of angry gang members to *Deliverance*-inspired rural areas with tractors and complex off-road sections, it's all here. And when you get up in the air and fly across the state of San Andreas you get a sense of how much there is to do – you could go there on a two-week holiday and still not see everything. Which is lucky, as that's something we plan to do as soon as we get hold of the final game.

PIMP MY CHARACTER

As well a fluctuating waistline and the potential to buff up, there are further options for customising CJ's appearance. Visit one of the hairdressers or barbers in the game and you can individualise CJ by giving him a different hairstyle or grooming his facial hair. It's unclear how far the diversity of this will go, but expect to be able to give CJ a massive afro or Snoop Dogg-style braids. Furthermore, find a tattoo parlour and you can ink CJ with one of the many designs on offer. Not content to just throw in a few lazy designs and logos, Rockstar has researched what sort of tattoos people were wearing in these cities in the early Nineties, paying particular attention to those used by gangs. Apparently you can use tattoos to pledge allegiance, so be careful – the wrong one could get you shot.

"SAN ANDREAS IS HUGE. YOU COULD GO THERE ON A TWO-WEEK HOLIDAY AND STILL NOT SEE EVERYTHING"

TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT



Sadly, Harry had no way to defend the Hogwarts Express from time-travelling clones.

No way we could make this shot – but Cortez is just about cool enough to pull it off.

It's now possible to fight alongside allies, including different versions of yourself.

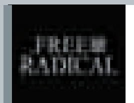
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE

TIMESPLITTERS 2 x INTERNET + PARADOX = TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT

"THIS WILL FEATURE HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF GAMEPLAY AND AN IMPROVED STORY MODE THAT TIES ALL THE MISSIONS TOGETHER"

ELECTRONIC ARTS PRESS RELEASE



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Originating from Rare at a time when the god-like status seemed justified, Free Radical has done what it knows best – first-person shooting – since leaving Nintendo's stable in 2000. This month sees something of a departure, as it releases its first third-person stealth/action title, *Second Sight*.

HISTORY

- **SECOND SIGHT** 2004 [Multi]
- **TIMESPLITTERS 2** 2002 [Multi]
- **TIMESPLITTERS** 2001 [PS2]

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, GameCube
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: Free Radical Design
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1
1-16 (online)

■ A third instalment of Free Radical's *GoldenEye* continuation, and a big revamp in the quality department as the licence moves from Eidos to EA.

PASSING TIME WATCHING BRAINS GO FLY

PS2 **Time travel always looks awesome in the movies, but in real life, where time only moves in one direction and at the same pace, it's far more frustrating – not least in the games industry, where developing a title can take ages.** So, having had a couple of linear man-years to think about it, how do you follow up one of the most respected shooters to grace a console? For Free Radical – whose *TimeSplitters 2* is recognised as a seminal multiplayer title in this FPS-heavy generation – it's a case of expanding on the principles that made the last game a hit rather than deviating from a well-worn template.

At its simplest, *Future Perfect* is the bigger, burlier brother of *TS2* (evident in hero Cortez's transformation into something of a Vin Diesel action figure) with levels far larger and more diverse than those in its weedier sibling. In fact, on a visit to EA's Redwood Studios we got to play a single-player level and can heartily vouch for the marked improvement.

The level in question – infiltrating a Scottish castle circa 1924 – sees several varied game elements slickly combined, including manoeuvring objects by crane and an on-rails mounted-gun section in addition to the high-energy bullet-fest most fans are expecting. And though many tasks retain the flick-switch approach of *TS2*, narrative scripting has been so well implemented here that events lend themselves to a far more immersive game whereby your hapless protagonist exists as part of a far larger combat experience.

Destructible enemy planes, for example, will randomly swoop down from above when Cortez is outside, while a tank battle further into the level requires intelligent use of scenery and multiple weapons in order to achieve success. In addition to the ten levels that make up the single-player game, Free Radical has expanded upon the many Arcade mode features that made *TS2* so popular, with mini-games, challenge maps and more unannounced bonus content.

The improvements made for *Future Perfect* extend to the graphics engine, which as well as taking a large jump in quality (crisper lines and much longer draw distances) has also seen a slight stylistic adjustment. As a result, the third *TimeSplitters* lacks a great deal of its predecessor's super-deformed quality, though not so much that you wouldn't recognise it in a showcase of FPSs, its irreverent humour still shining through.

However, it's in the multiplayer modes that Free Radical has made the biggest alterations, chiefly because it's now possible to create your own maps and either challenge players in them or just share them with others online. You're also now able to tailor online battles (for up to 16 players), creating various types of tournament and longer-term arcade leaderboards.

Free Radical is keeping quiet about the most original feature in *Future Perfect* – the ability to team up with parallel versions of yourself from other time zones, resulting in some paradox-heavy gameplay. Whether this affects the narrative or dynamically enhances that classic *TimeSplitters* gameplay is just something we'll have to wait until next year to find out. Unless you can traverse time yourself, that is, in which case you're probably playing it already.

> "AT ITS SIMPLEST, FUTURE PERFECT IS THE BIGGER, BURLIER BROTHER OF TIMESPLITTERS 2"

YOUR ARMY NEEDS YOU



Thanks to Electronic Arts' new-found love of Xbox Live, both PS2 and Xbox versions of *Future Perfect* will be optimised for online play. While at Redwood Studios we took part in a 16-player 'capture the briefcase' match-up that required a stealthy defence of our base as well as a full frontal assault on the enemy's camp and clever use of cover in order to alter the balance of power across the expansive map on show. Though the developer is yet to make an announcement as to whether any of the vehicles will be available online (trucks, tanks and cars are all promised) it will be entirely possible to play the one-player game in networked co-op mode, meaning you can finally avoid sharing a screen when you team up with a partner.



■ Your snazzy wristband projects a holographic map of the area that you can use for navigation.



■ The chopper is a boss, but most of the enemy objects in the game are fully destructible.

MEDIEVAL LORDS: BUILD, DEFEND, EXPAND



The fully 3D map will allow you to zoom in and sample the sounds of your village. Ooh, squeaking rats.

MODERN LIFE IS RUBBISH

***Civilization, SimCity…* we've all seen real-time, resource management strategy games before.** It really is a genre that has enjoyed little in the way of innovation over the last few years – and if *Medieval Lords* is anything to go by then this isn't about to change.

Nope, innovative *Medieval Lords* is not. That said, the few levels that we've seen haven't failed to impress. Slick visuals, a fully 3D map that allows you to zoom right into your village and sample the sights and sounds of any individual area, and an amazingly relaxing soundtrack that manages to distract you from the fact that leprosy is probably about to relieve your villagers of their limbs at any moment. However, none of these are the main point of interest.

Monte Cristo is trying to bridge the gap between hardcore resource managers and those who previously haven't been interested in games of this type. A tough thing to try to achieve, but it's been attempted by doing away with many of the genre's complexities and making this as easy to get into as possible. Generally, it's simple stuff – start making obvious layout errors like squeezing too many houses into a small area or building a peasants' graveyard next to food-packed barn, and the residents of your village are likely to get a nasty dose of the plague.

On the other hand, well-placed statues and spacious housing areas will see citizens lead a merry life of shopping and theatre, at least until the Vikings attack, anyway. At the same time, the promise of amazing detail, immersion and the odd strategic battle will keep the veterans happy. It's ambitious if nothing else…

Medieval Lords seems to have plenty of nice touches, and the pick-up-and-play nature of the game is bound to scoop up a few of the stragglers who left the bar-chart-ridden world of resource management behind when things started to get too complicated. However, this simplicity could deter many hardcore fans of the genre who could fear the game will be unchallenging. It's going to be a difficult balance to get right and it's this balance that will play a key part in how well the title performs when the release date rolls around.

"THIS IS GOING TO TRY BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN HARDCORE RTS FANS AND THOSE WHO HAVEN'T BEEN INTERESTED BEFORE"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: France
PUBLISHER: Digital Jesters
DEVELOPER: Monte Cristo
RELEASE: Oct '04
GENRE: Real-Time Strategy
PLAYERS: 1

Build a medieval community. Defend it when needed. Expand into other domains. Simple, really.



With time and effort you'll build something a medieval lord would be proud of.

The developer wants to entice RTS-curious gamers, but will die-hard fans be interested too?


eMag

BROTHERS IN ARMS

LOOK INTO A SOLDIER'S EYES AND TELL HIM YOU LOVE HIM

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PC, PS2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Gearbox
RELEASE: Dec '04/Jan '05
GENRE: Squad-Based FPS
PLAYERS: 1-16

Befriend your fellow soldiers and then watch them die in this shockingly real World War II simulation. Flashbacks optional.

While games about war are nothing new, the intense level of accuracy and realism offered by *Brothers In Arms* is nothing short of startling. Like a drowsy couch potato who sits to attention the moment three of his lottery numbers appear in a row, we jumped and gazed at *Brothers In Arms*' cut-scenes. Games normally fail terribly at invoking a sense of realism and panic in the way films have done for ages, yet *Brothers In Arms* uses ample voice-overs, explosions and chaotic direction to send a shiver down players' spines. All before the killing has started.

Realism is a big part of *Brothers In Arms*. Gearbox hired retired US army colonel John Antel to supervise and direct the game's authenticity, used maps from the Washington National Archives and visited the places within the game – all to ensure the most true-to-war simulation ever. And the result is breathtaking. Gearbox showed us real-life photos and the in-game versions and the similarities were eerily close. Gearbox even took the time to draft in Sgt Ed Peniche – one of the surviving servicemen who fought in Normandy – to give his impressions on the game's realism. "It's just like being back there," apparently.

Leaving aside moral objections to asking an ageing ex-soldier to view accurate representations of a time he probably still has nightmares about, Sgt Peniche's view was not necessary – it's clear how real this looks. Anyone who's been to these locations for real will be able to find their way around the levels in this game with ease. Similarly, those who end up spending a lot of time wandering through *Brothers In Arms* will have no problems navigating the fields of Normandy should they ever wake up there after a heavy night's boozing.

Realism doesn't end with locations. Look at the screenshots on this page and gaze into the soldiers' eyes. These are heavy, saddened eyes – you can almost feel their pain. When you wander about in the game, your men's gaze fixes on you and their expressions change, creating a creepy sense of emotion within their polygonal bodies. This is intended to force you into some kind of guardian role, choosing to take care of your men rather than letting them take bullets and die.

And you can't just let your characters die – you need them. You must use your warfare skills to instruct your team into prime flanking positions to outwit the enemy. This isn't to say they need babysitting as with other games – once they're sent into their positions they react just as trained soldiers would, taking the initiative and looking out for themselves. You can't make them do everything, though. We tried sitting back and sending our troops in to sort it all out and the result was just an endless trade of fire between them and the enemy. Only when we got involved was the battle won (or lost).

In its current build, *Brothers In Arms* is an extremely well presented – if morally dubious – game of war. Levels are not just accurate but extremely lush and pretty, with a highly overwhelming and alarming atmosphere created by an incredible use of sounds and lighting. Even though many of the unpleasant and ghoulish scenarios in this game may leave many 'hard-thinkers' feeling slightly uneasy, there's little doubt *Brothers In Arms* could easily turn out to be the most realistic and involving war game yet seen.

PROGRESS REPORT, SERGEANT!

After playing both the Xbox and PC versions of *Brothers In Arms*, the old battle between the two formats has reared its ugly head. Even though the Xbox analogue stick has yet to be adapted to its proper sensitivity, it's clear this game is best suited to PC. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts at the Xbox version, we managed to almost effortlessly blaze our way through the same level on the PC, thanks to comparatively robotic aiming using the mouse and keyboard. Later missions will undoubtedly require more thought, but it'll be a real letdown if a significant part of *Brothers In Arms*' difficulty lies with the controls. If it remains a problem this will undermine the game's true point, and given the effort put in elsewhere that would be a massive shame.

"YOU'RE FORCED INTO A GUARDIAN ROLE, TAKING CARE OF YOUR MEN RATHER THAN LETTING THEM DIE"



Here you and your men are up against a tank. This happened in real life. Imagine it.

Look into his eyes and tell him he's just cannon fodder. You can't, can you?



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Based in Texas, Gearbox has contributed to numerous games and conversions (such as Bungie's *Halo* on PC and the PS2 version of *Half-Life*) before finally developing its own, in-house project that is *Brothers In Arms*. Expect further great things from Gearbox in the future.

HISTORY

- **HALO** 2003 [PC]
- **JAMES BOND NIGHTFIRE** 2002 [PC]
- **HALF-LIFE** 2001 [PS2]

"BROTHERS IN ARMS IS BASED ON A TRUE STORY AND WILL IMMERSE GAMERS INTO THE EMOTIONALLY CHARGED SIDE OF WAR"

UBISOFT PRESS RELEASE

When you've got more time, aiming properly makes taking out far-off enemies much easier.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

MAKE FRIENDS, THEN LOSE THEM

WAR + FRIENDS - FRIENDS = BROTHERS IN ARMS

Using your handy blue marker you can specify the position you wish your soldiers to take.

Your men are smart enough to look after themselves with just a few instructions.


eMag

CRISIS ZONE



True to the arcade, the time limit in the bottom corner will keep the pressure on.

The option to use two guns is there, but how many gamers will be able to pull it off?

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Namco Hometek Inc.
DEVELOPER: Namco
RELEASE: Sept '04
GENRE: Action Shooter
PLAYERS: 1

A terrorist group has taken over a complex in Garland Square and it's up to you and your gunslinging abilities to put a stop to their antics. For good.

WE GET NAMCO'S LATEST IN OUR SIGHTS

To anyone who's spent any amount of time at their local arcade, the *Time Crisis* series will be no stranger – more like a money-guzzling best friend, actually. We remember pumping our hard-earned pennies into the machine in an effort to learn the locations of all the enemies and then draw the legendary 'crowd' at a later date when we waltzed through the entire game on a single credit.

Crisis Zone, the third in the series and the only one of the four games to opt for a single sub-machine gun as standard rather than dual pistols, first appeared in the arcades five years ago and the leap to home consoles is long overdue. Thankfully, our immediate concerns about the game looking and feeling stale after so long were unnecessary and *Crisis Zone* promises to include plenty of features that were never available back in its arcade days.

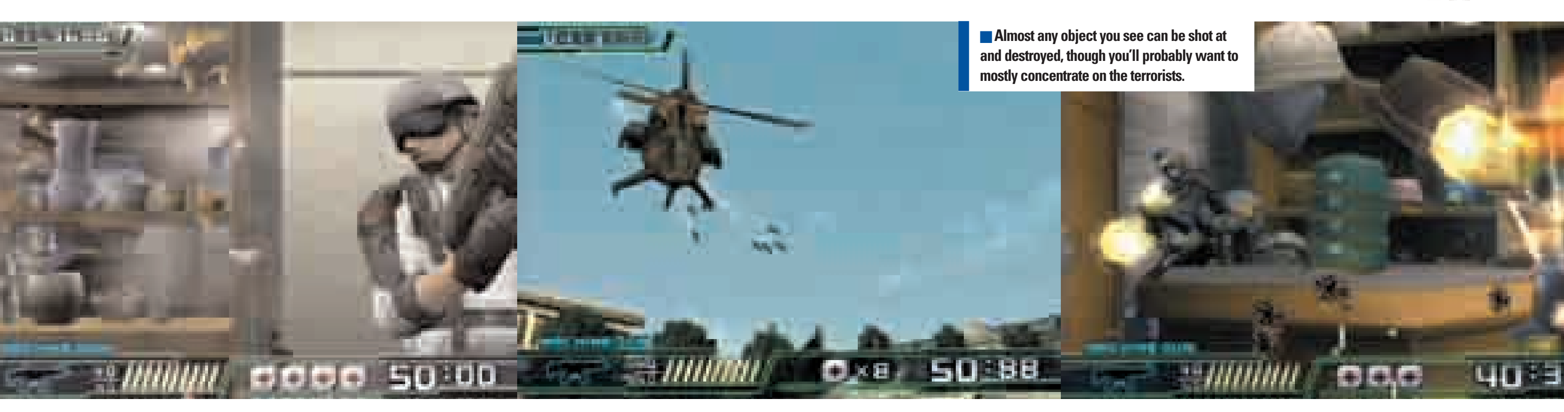
A much-needed graphical overhaul has taken place, sound has been improved (although the preview code still had the now trademark *Time Crisis* bad voice acting), and as well as the main story mode the player will have a set of Crisis Missions to work through. These will provide the majority of the game's unlockable content, which is set to include a host of new weapons, extra game settings and an entirely new story scenario.

There's also the promise of several unlockable new enemies. Hopefully these, along with the other hidden items, will help add more replay value to the game by preventing you from easily memorising enemy patterns, as this has a horrible habit of slowly turning titles of this genre into nothing more than a routine rather than a game of skill.

Somewhat surprisingly, a pal-pleasing two-player option has been shunned in favour of a John Woo-style, two-gun single-player mode. This will basically prompt those who have more than one lightgun to nudge their mates away from the console, wave both blasters themselves and attempt to take out the terrorist forces Neo-style. Sounds fun, although after a quick dabble it was soon found that the underdeveloped muscles in the weaker arm gave up the fight for justice about three minutes into the battle and ultimately let the side down. To be honest, we can't help thinking that maybe a two-player element would have been a better idea.

That puny-armed gripe aside, *Crisis Zone* looks to be a tidy update for this perennially popular series. 

"THE TWO-GUN SINGLE-PLAYER MODE WILL PROMPT YOU TO TAKE OUT THE TERRORIST FORCES MATRIX-STYLE"



Almost any object you see can be shot at and destroyed, though you'll probably want to mostly concentrate on the terrorists.

STOLEN



"STOLEN BOASTS SOME TRULY AMAZING TECHNICAL AND PRESENTATIONAL FEATURES TO GIVE IT A SPECTACULAR LOOK THAT WILL CAPTIVATE GAMERS"

HIP INTERACTIVE PRESS RELEASE

■ Look familiar? *Stolen* draws influences from all manner of other media.

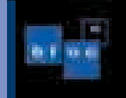
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

GET IN, GET THE GOODS, GET OUT

ROGUE OPS - RUBBISH x SPLINTER CELL: PT = STOLEN

■ Melting through steel panels plays out much like a *Mario Party* mini-game.

■ Sneaking past multiple enemies in light environments will present some of *Stolen*'s toughest moments.



PUBLISHER PROFILE

Having picked up *Stolen* after it was dropped by Sony, Hip Interactive looks to be coming out of relative obscurity with a great line-up for 2005. High-profile titles like the first 3D addition to the *CT Special Forces* series and the promising *Pariah* (as well as *Stolen*) look sure to finally put Hip on the mip, er, map.

HISTORY

- **BEYOND DIVINITY** 2004 [PC]
- **KILL.SWITCH** 2003 [PC]
- **WARCOMMANDER** 2001 [PC]



There aren't many people that could get past all those laser tripwires…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Hip Interactive
DEVELOPER: Blue 52
RELEASE: March '05
GENRE: Stealth Action
PLAYERS: 1

It's the turn of London-based developer Blue 52 to try its hand at the stealth action genre as token female lead Anya is dropped into the high-risk world of professional thievery.

YOU STOLE THE SUN FROM MY HEART

You have to feel for games like *Stolen*. When it entered development, the concept of a female-led stealth title was without the negative stigma now attached to it courtesy of the double header of the recent stealth overkill and, more specifically, the disappointment that was *Rogue Ops*. Now, despite the fact that Blue 52's sneak-'em-up is vying for the crown of the Fisher king, Joe Public is likely to overlook *Stolen* and plump instead for a *Splinter Cell* or *Metal Gear*, familiar names they know they can trust. The days of taking a chance on an unknown quantity are almost over (having been in decline since the end of the 8-bit, under-a-fiver days) so when you've got such a familiar concept on your hands, the only way to make it stand out on the shelves and in people's minds is to make it your own.

Stolen is taking some huge risks with its interesting takes on many established rules of sneaking. For one, Anya has no real lethal force to fall back on should her stealth fail her – only a weak electrical stun gun and Anya's incredible athleticism stand between evasion and lead-filled failure once the alarms start wailing. Luckily, while your Taser can knock out cameras and security terminals, you're able to avoid such obstacles by scurrying up walls, hugging walls under cover of darkness and even traversing the rafters to complete your objective. This goal will almost always take the form of an expensive artefact and, as in just about every jewellery heist that Hollywood forces down our throats, security gets tighter as you near the prize. Naturally, this culminates in annoyances like complex laser grids and a greatly increased guard presence that will require nothing some crazy skills to get past.

Also impressive is just how functional Anya's ArmPad is, combining more functions than even the finest Swiss Army knife and allowing the feisty lead to undertake tasks such as picking locks, cutting through sheet metal, communicating with man-on-the-outside (as in an external contact, not a shemale) Louie and cracking safes. Many of these will be done by way of clever mini-games while other actions may need her to use her equally multi-tasking goggles that incorporate just about every colourful sensory display you've ever seen in a game and then some.

By contrast, the guards on duty are as regimental as they come. They'll hear you tapping away at keyboards and come running, use their torches to scour the shadows for you, and if it comes down to it, empty bullets into Anya until it's rather hard to walk. Using Anya's many scanners, zoom visors and such, it's possible to learn their patrol routes from afar and even catch a glimpse of duty rosters to find out which areas will offer the toughest challenges.

It's an odd change to feel so outnumbered and, moreover, outgunned in such a game but one that we feel will work in Blue 52's favour – we're just hoping that we haven't become a nation too trigger-happy to fully enjoy *Stolen*'s emphasis on remaining undetected. Bullets have always been a healthy last resort in stealth action titles so we can imagine that balancing and progression will be pivotal in deciding whether or not the game pulls off its ambitious twist. Having been stung by *Rogue Ops* and *Cy Girls*, we can but hope that *Stolen* will be the title to turn around female fortunes as far as sneaking goes. If nothing else, it can't be any worse than *Catwoman*, right?

PLAY MORE

Perhaps one of the most refreshing aspects of *Stolen* is the fact that it's totally unashamed to be a videogame. A dangerous tendency these days is for games to swing just too far into cinema territory, but by making every step of the burglaries interactive and laying out levels specifically with Anya's physical feats in mind, *Stolen* is involving and entertaining rather than shepherding you along with movie sequences. The near-future setting also gives some credence to the range of miniaturised gadgets, but while the game does offer explanations for all of Anya's toys, it's the underlying fact that *Stolen* is proud to be a game that sees them all shrunk into two tiny accessories.

"ANYA HAS NO REAL LETHAL FORCE TO FALL BACK ON SHOULD HER STEALTH FAIL HER"

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR



Watching your squad get decimated is disheartening, but at least it looks pretty impressive.

Strategic points such as this one generate resources, so taking and defending them is essential.

FROM TABLETOP TO DESKTOP, WARHAMMER IS GETTING DIGITAL ON YOUR ASS

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Relic
RELEASE: 20 Sept
GENRE: RTS
PLAYERS: 1 (2-8 Online)

At last, a strategy game that will let Warhammer fans recreate their tabletop adventures on their PC. It's so darned obvious you can't believe no-one thought of it earlier…

The world of Warhammer 40,000 is ripe for conversion into a PC strategy game, so it beggars belief that it has taken until now for one to arrive. THQ raised many eyebrows when it announced its first Warhammer title would be *FireWarrior*, a first-person shooter rather than the detailed strategy game that both the PC and board-gaming fraternities were expecting. *FireWarrior* inevitably turned out to be something of a turkey, so enter stage left Relic (the developer of the excellent *Homeworld* games) in a bid to repair the credibility of both THQ and the Warhammer franchise.

If early looks are anything to go by, it's set for some degree of success, and it isn't hard to see why – Warhammer 40,000 provides a perfect backdrop for a strategy smash hit. The hardest challenge faced by any new developer is to make its gameworld believable, consistent and engaging. Presenting the player with whole new races, new stories and new battles requires the fleshing out of these key elements, taking time and money, and often proving too much for many developers to pull off successfully. Even worse is when the usual hackneyed cliches are trotted out to neatly sidestep the issue (what's that? The humans need to head out and do battle with the Orcs again?).

However, Warhammer 40,000 provided Relic with a hugely detailed universe in which to set its adventure, and by incorporating the rich fiction that Warhammer boasts without limiting the game's appeal to hardcore tabletop gaming fans, it looks to have set itself up with a potential hit. In other words, those who know and love the existing Warhammer world will be right at home with this, while those who have never encountered it before will be able to feel the benefits provided by such a strongly established franchise.

One of the elements that promises to make *Dawn Of War* stand out is the absence of resource farming. The genre as a whole seems to be moving away from this method of power and material supply, and games like *Dawn Of War* are all the better for it as it stops easy victories being achieved by simply separating an opponent from their resource fields. Instead, resources are generated by taking strategic points on the map (à la *Z: Steel Soldiers*) – the more strategic points under a player's control, the more units they can create and maintain.

This ensures that success is all about moving units towards the enemy base in a logical fashion, defending your own strategic points whilst attacking the enemy's. Again, it is still at an early stage, but it seems to be working quite effectively and the general feel from playing the beta version is that this title is definitely moving in the right direction – there is no niggle that seems serious enough to scupper the project, and those that are present are clearly still being ironed out. The only major concern is that the real-time element may not work too well with battles that are likely to be fought on a number of different fronts, but time will tell how well this actually works.

Warhammer fans are a loyal (and demanding) bunch, and thousands have been following the development of this title with bated breath. Whether it's been worth it will be revealed when the game ships in September.

RACE FOR SUCCESS

The game will feature a total of four playable races and although there is still some work to do on evenly balancing the gameplay in multiplayer, they are shaping up nicely. The Space Marines are probably going to be the most appealing to franchise newcomers, but those who have a hankering for adventure will also be able to control the Chaos, Eldar and Orcs. At the moment, Orcs seem far too powerful with some absolutely lethal units, but it seems the choice is balanced enough to please most gamers. More races will undoubtedly appear courtesy of the inevitable expansion packs that will become available before too long.

"WARHAMMER FANS ARE A LOYAL AND DEMANDING BUNCH, AND HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS TITLE WITH BATED BREATH"

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

PC



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Relic's debut title in 1999 was *Homeworld*, a huge hit both critically and commercially, and one that built solid foundations for the Vancouver-based company. In May this year, THQ recognised the huge talent of Relic and bought the studio after working closely with it throughout the development of *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn Of War*.

HISTORY

- **IMPOSSIBLE CREATURES** 2003 [PC]
- **HOMEWORLD 2** 2003 [PC]
- **HOMEWORLD** 1999 [PC]

■ Some units, like these Dreadnoughts, are just too powerful in the beta version and really need balancing.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

40,000 REASONS TO BUY THIS GAME

FIREWARRIOR x Z: STEEL SOLDIERS + PERIMETER = WARHAMMER 40,000: DOW

"WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR WILL BRING THE EPIC MOMENTS OF THE TABLETOP GAMING EXPERIENCE TO LIFE WITH GENRE-DEFINING FRONT-LINE COMBAT SCENARIOS"

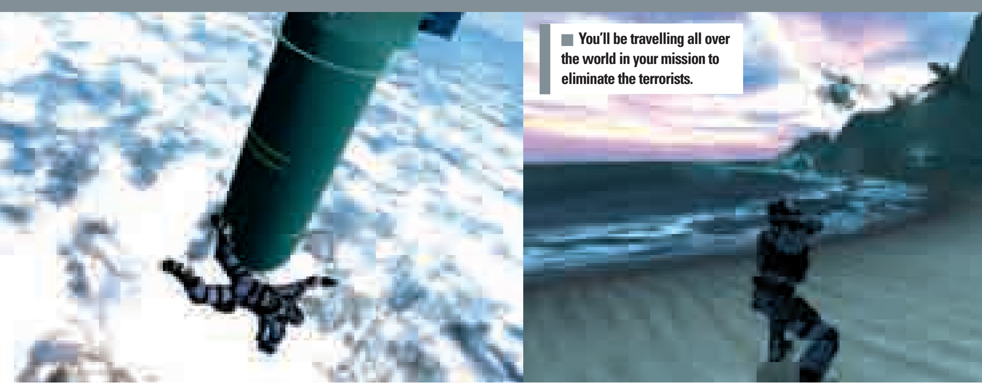
ALEX GARDEN, CEO, RELIC

■ The scalable camera allows the player to zoom right in on the action.

CT SPECIAL FORCES: FIRE FOR EFFECT



You know the routine – infiltrate base, shoot things, save the world…



You'll be travelling all over the world in your mission to eliminate the terrorists.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC, PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: France
PUBLISHER: HIP Interactive
DEVELOPER: Asobo Studio
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: Action
PLAYERS: 1

Battle through numerous countries and use your team's individual abilities to stop another terrorist plot.

ASOBO INTRODUCES THE SPECIAL FORCES TO A NEW DIMENSION

No wonder the war on terror is still raging – any supercriminal just needs to pick up one of the dozens of counter-terrorism games swamping the market to find out the latest techniques being used by his pursuers. One quick blast on the latest Sam Fisher wannabe should be enough to help him avoid detection as he plans to release some new deadly cheese virus or hack into the Prime Minister's piggy bank. But gamers are of the opinion that you can't save the world enough times.

The *CT Special Forces* series has already enjoyed relative success over the last three years on the GBA, where the games take the form of *Metal Slug*-alike side scrolling shooters, so this move into the 3D stealth/action genre is going to be a huge step for Asobo. From the screenshots we've seen, things seem to be shaping up nicely. The aspect that immediately intrigues us is the inclusion of what look to be free-fall skydiving sections. An interesting gameplay element if fully realised and (apart from in *007: Everything Or Nothing*, which touched upon it briefly) one that hasn't really been done before.

Players will switch between controlling two characters with different attributes: Stealth Owl – an expert in precision shooting, free-fall master and general stealth god – and Raptor, a brute of a man whose expertise lies with heavy weaponry and hand-to-hand combat. These characters will have their own paths through the levels, and the developer promises multiple routes through each of the 25 missions giving the game huge replay value. The latest rag-doll physics, should also provide some 'cramming big bodies into small cupboards' fun. Sadly, Asobo has opted to focus solely on a single-player experience, so no multiplayer options or online play will be included.

The question that we've got to ask is whether this game is going to be able to compete in an already bulging market. By the time this is available we'll have seen the release of the next instalment of the *Splinter Cell* series as well as a host of other terrorist-thwarting titles, so this is really going to have to be something special if Asobo wants it stand out at all. It's still very early days, though, and around the time you're reading this some early preview code will probably be landing on our doormat so we can see exactly what's on offer.

That chopper didn't stand a chance against the unrivalled sniping skills of Stealth Owl.

"THIS WILL HAVE TO BE SOMETHING SPECIAL IF ASOBO WANTS IT TO STAND OUT"


eMag

SNIPER ELITE

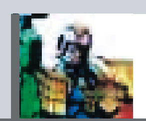


■ Sure, you're a great sniper, but the chances of beating a tank are slim.

"YOU ARE SNIPER ELITE, RECRUITED BY THE AMERICAN OSS TO OPERATE BEHIND ENEMY LINES AND TO RETRIEVE THE NAZI ATOMIC SECRETS BEFORE THE SOVIET NKVD"
REBELLION PRESS RELEASE



SNIPER ELITE
XBOX/MULTIFORMAT



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Oxford-based Rebellion has grown in size, ability and recognition since its foundation in 1993 and now has some great licences under its belt. While its output is far from what could be called 'consistent', the good bits are very good indeed while the bad bits are… well, we don't really like to talk about the bad bits.

HISTORY

- **JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH** 2003 [Multi]
- **THE MUMMY** 2000 [PSone]
- **ALIEN VERSUS PREDATOR** 1999 [PC]

"ALL WE NEED IS JUST A LITTLE PATIENCE"

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PC, PS2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: TBC
DEVELOPER: Rebellion
RELEASE: 2005
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1 (1-8 online)

Take to the streets of Forties Berlin and get between the Germans and the Russians to secure Nazi atomic secrets. How? Shoot a lot of people from really, really far away.

You know those people you play against online and really hate? They know exactly where all the good weapons and hiding spots are and manage to reach unthinkable sniping spots from which to rain down an obscene amount of death. Their species – Homo Campus – is renowned for its patience and accuracy, traits that may be linked to a craving for vengeance following ridicule due to their species' questionable name. Whether or not this is true, we've seen plenty of these creatures kicked from gaming sessions for 'cheating'. Quite how sitting still and shooting people rather than doing so while moving constitutes a violation of rules, we don't know. Perhaps gamers just don't appreciate the art of marksmanship.

Refreshingly, *Sniper Elite* dispenses with all that you know to be true of sniping (the spirit-level-perfect trajectories of *Unreal Tournament*, for example) by giving you some of the most advanced rifles of their day and building an accurate sniper simulation around them. Everything from posture and heart rate to wind speed and target location will affect every shot you take in a cruel game that even forces you to consider the bullet's trajectory as it spirals further and further away from the barrel that it once called home.

But as is the case with many such games where a degree of skill and experience must be applied, the payoff is gigantic – if you thought popping a few skulls across a crowded *UT* map was a rush, wait until you aim several feet wide of and above an enemy's brain only to watch the camera pull in on the speeding projectile and watch it bend perfectly through the target with lethal accuracy.

It's not just the gunplay that showcases such attention to detail, either. The 28 missions that span war-torn Berlin all take place in a realistic remodelling of the city based on pre-war documentation and photography in an attempt to totally immerse the player, and it sounds as though residents and invading forces will be no slouches either. Rebellion's boasts about the enemy AI have us foaming at the mouth with sadistic anticipation – the cleverer an enemy is, the more glory and respect is to be gleaned from their demise.

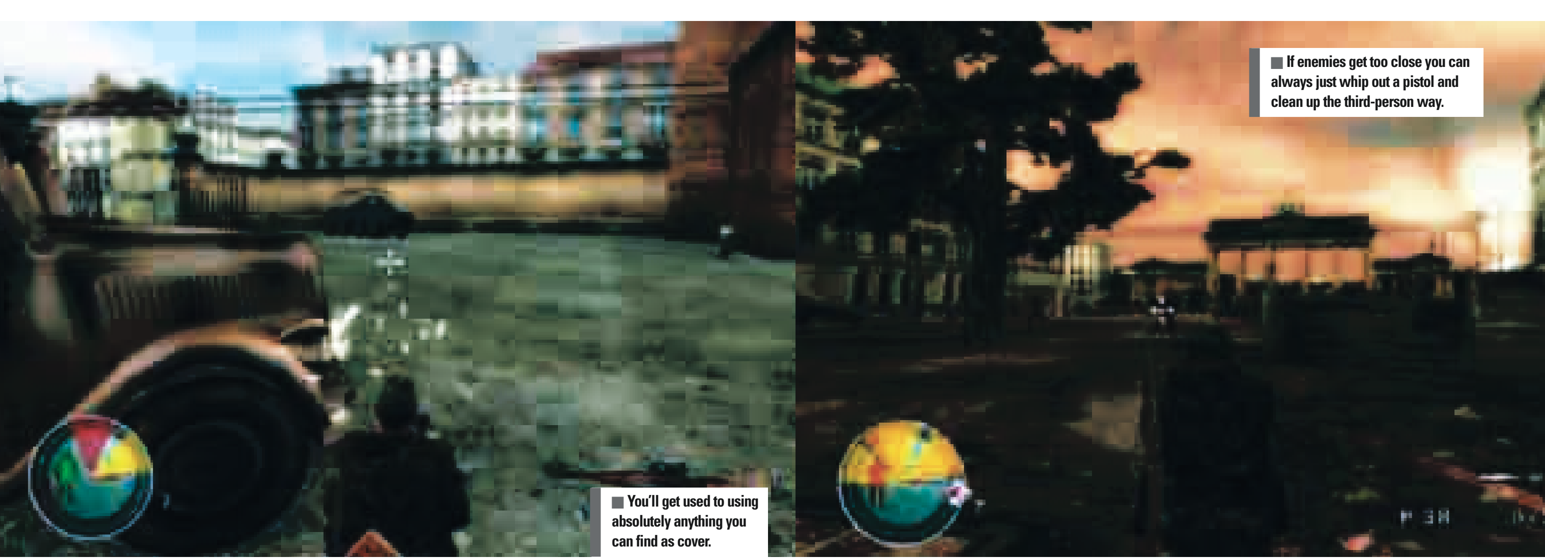
With scripting a thing of the past, we're promised a sequence of realistic, living situations to deal with as you sneak and snipe your way through the conflicting Russian and German forces. As in titles like *Far Cry*, enemies will react cleverly to events and if you alert too many guards it's all too easy to take a few bullets to the back as you line up your next shot. Rather than rushing at you, foes can plot courses that should take you by surprise.

It may still be a way off but *Sniper Elite* hasn't slipped from our sights since our first real look at E3 last year. Back then, we were looking at little more than a collection of great ideas, but it has almost brought a tear to our unblinking eye to see just how beautiful the game has grown up to be. There's plenty to look forward to here – a lengthy campaign and a two-player co-op mode as well as a selection of online options – and without wanting to tempt fate, *Sniper Elite* could be the title that puts Rebellion back on the map. Come what may in the run-up to the game's release, we'll be right here. Sitting. Waiting. But definitely not cheating.

"SNIPER ELITE COULD BE THE GAME THAT PUTS REBELLION BACK ON THE MAP"

HAPPY CAMPERS

Picking off an almost endless supply of German and Russian soldiers not enough for you? You bloodthirsty fool. Still, if there's one thing better than taking out two men with a single perfectly aimed bullet, it's the same situation only with the AI replaced by two of your mates. *Sniper Elite* will offer up to eight eagle-eyed gamers the chance to go at it in what promise to be some of the slowest-paced battles you'll find online (*Steel Battalion: Line Of Contact* excluded, naturally). That's not to say they'll be bad – far from it. With so many stealthy titles becoming high-octane death-fests when taken online, we're enjoying the prospect of picking a spot and adjusting our eyes until every movement instantly triggers one crucial bullet. After all, any more than that and there's not really much point in hiding…



You'll get used to using absolutely anything you can find as cover.

If enemies get too close you can always just whip out a pistol and clean up the third-person way.

DEATH BY DEGREES



What action adventure game would be complete without a sniper rifle?

LIKE JOEY FROM FRIENDS, TEKKEN'S NINA WILLIAMS GETS HER OWN SHOW

PS2 **Ask any gamer to name their favourite *Tekken* character and chances are Nina will crop up most regularly.** So it's no surprise that Namco has produced a spin-off game based around this supple, polygonal beauty.

Set before the first *Tekken* game, *Death By Degrees* tells of the events leading up to Nina's entrance into the Iron Fist Tournament. Investigating the Kometa – a terrorist group responsible for stealing the Salacia (a powerful weapon) – Ms Williams boards a cruise ship where the Kometa is gathered and delves deep into its criminal operations, intending to retrieve the Salacia and shut down the organisation.

Death By Degrees is trying to blend *Resident Evil*-style adventuring and *Tekken*-style fighting, and through 140 rooms and 20 hours of game time you get to use all manner of fighting skills and weaponry. Many of Nina's moves are straight from *Tekken* – fans should instantly recognise her throw and submission techniques as well as other signature moves such as the Evil Mist. However, the execution of these moves has changed. A unique 360-degree combat system means that instead of using the D-pad and buttons you use the analog sticks – you move about with the left and direct your attack with the right, giving you an easy way of attacking in multiple directions when surrounded by enemies.

It's not all face-to-face fighting, however. There are also swords, machine guns and sniper rifles to play with, and as we've come to expect from games of this type, you're required to sneak around and snap a few necks. One of the more interesting ways in which you can kill is with the Critical Hit X-ray targeting system that allows you to shatter enemies' bones and rupture internal organs. Splendid.

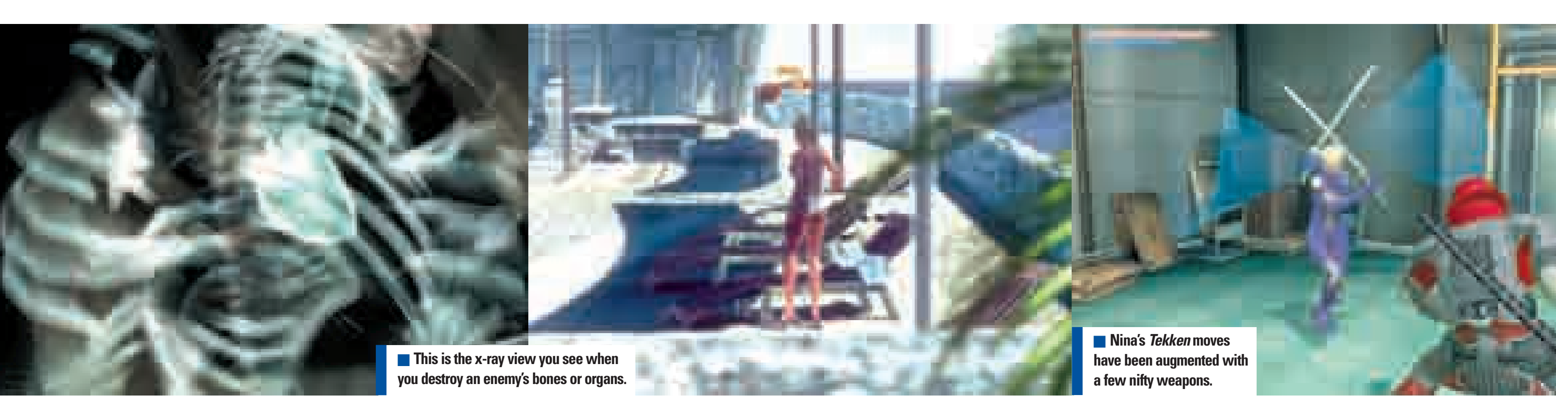
There's a lot on offer, but as with all titles like this there's a risk the good stuff will be bogged down in backtracking designed to lengthen the game. Still, with Namco surely wanting to keep the quality of *Death By Degrees* in line with what we've come to expect from *Tekken*, everything should be fine.

> "DEATH BY DEGREES IS ATTEMPTING TO BLEND RESIDENT EVIL-STYLE ADVENTURING AND TEKKEN-STYLE FIGHTING"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Sony
DEVELOPER: Namco
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: Action
PLAYERS: 1

Before she boxed the ears of men the world over, Nina Williams was a secret agent. This is how she saved the world from dastardly terrorists.



This is the x-ray view you see when you destroy an enemy's bones or organs.

Nina's *Tekken* moves have been augmented with a few nifty weapons.


eMag

BLINX 2: MASTERS OF TIME AND SPACE

THE AGE-OLD FEUD BETWEEN PIGS AND CATS RAGES ON

Bless him. As hard as he's tried, Blinx has so far failed in nearly everything he's attempted. He tried to make Japan realise that the Xbox wasn't just a foreign breezeblock but didn't really do Microsoft any favours. He tried to become the mascot of the Xbox but bucked the feline trend by falling not on his feet but flat on his furry little face. Thankfully, the one key area in which our favourite time cat couldn't fail was one of the few that have gone in his favour. For what it was, Blinx's first starring role was a good laugh despite the sluggish controls, so aside from a little tightening, this Time Sweeper title plays out in much the same way. But this won't even be half of the finished game…

Players will now get the choice of being a Blinx-style cat with time-control abilities or a porcine member of the Tom Tom Gang, a bunch of snouted evildoers with power over space itself. This means that while the cat's away pausing or rewinding time, the pigs will play with gadgets like portable black holes, warp tunnels and, most amusingly of all, a Subspace Dive. This allows the piggies to dive under the ground, navigating through a periscope that causes the cats no end of confusion.

The best thing about this divide is just how differently the two rivals play – Blinx's game still adheres to all the rules laid down by his debut while the Tom Tom Gang's adventure plays out more along the stealth-action lines of sections of *Beyond Good & Evil* or even *Splinter Cell*. You'll also get to customise your characters – both feline and sausage-bound – in a staggering amount of ways, making your character not only unique for the single-player game but for multiplayer as well.

While the game is too far away for us to sample the online play, one new element we have been able to get our paws on is the two-player Co-operative mode. This allows a friend to join in the fun but don't expect that to make things easier – levels unfold differently with two people playing, leading to extra areas that can only be passed by working together as well as more devious puzzles and more plentiful enemies. And the improvements don't end there.

Artoon has gone all-out to make a beautiful game even more so and the graphics are very impressive. They're complemented by a host of special effects such as those that accompany time-shifting abilities and flashes of lightning during the sneaky pig stages, but gamers who survived the first game with their sanity intact may not revel in the fact that the game's music has somehow been made even more brain-meltingly chirpy and retro, meaning the annoying-yet-lovable tunes will still be bouncing around inside your head long after the dull hum of the Xbox gives way to silence.

Blinx has become quite a joke in gaming circles, and many people have been drawn towards the sequel solely by the potential for further mockery, similar to the jeering crowds that turn out for a new *Army Men* game. But the fact that many critics have left with their tails between their legs after seeing *Masters Of Time And Space* is a good sign. Artoon has implemented some great ideas and tightened up the controls and camera just enough to fire *Blinx 2* way up our wanted list.



"WHILE THE CAT'S AWAY, THE PIGS WILL PLAY WITH GADGETS LIKE PORTABLE BLACK HOLES AND WARP TUNNELS"

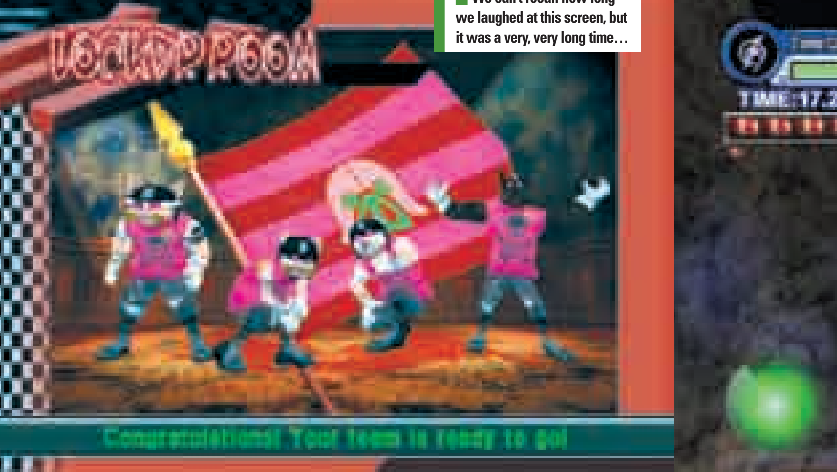
DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Artoon
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-2 (1-4 online)

Choose between furry time manipulators or space-warping pigs then take on two very different quests or face off against your rivals in an on- or offline battle.

PAWS VERSUS TROTTERS

One of the most enticing features Artoon is adding to *Blinx 2* is online multiplayer. Pitting pigs against cats, it's not too far removed from *Pandora Tomorrow* – the two game modes become one as the whiskered ones bend time while their pink foes lay all manner of bottomless pits and space warp gates. It's unclear just how the whole thing will gel or even what modes will be on offer – both Battle and Co-op exist offline – but we're assuming that many of the rules from the Co-op modes will also apply. This would see each team impervious to the abilities of its members (so cats can still move while one of them is rewinding time, for instance), but getting the time-control powers working online will be quite a feat.



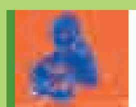
We can't recall how long we laughed at this screen, but it was a very, very long time…



An early level sees you grabbing batteries for this Autogyro to reach the boss.

BLINX 2: MASTERS OF TIME AND SPACE

XBOX



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Based in Yokohama, Japan, Artoon was formed in 1999 by former Sega head of development Yoji Ishii. He was later joined by other ex-Sega staff, which would explain the company's penchant for cute characters and infectious music. The firm continues to prove its ability for creating quality character-led titles.

HISTORY

- **BLINX: THE TIME SWEEPER** 2002 [Xbox]
- **GHOST VIBRATION** 2002 [PS2]
- **PINOBEE** 2001 [GBA]

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

THE CAT THAT GOT THE CREAM

BLINX + SPACE PIGS x MULTIPLAYER = BLINX 2: MOTAS

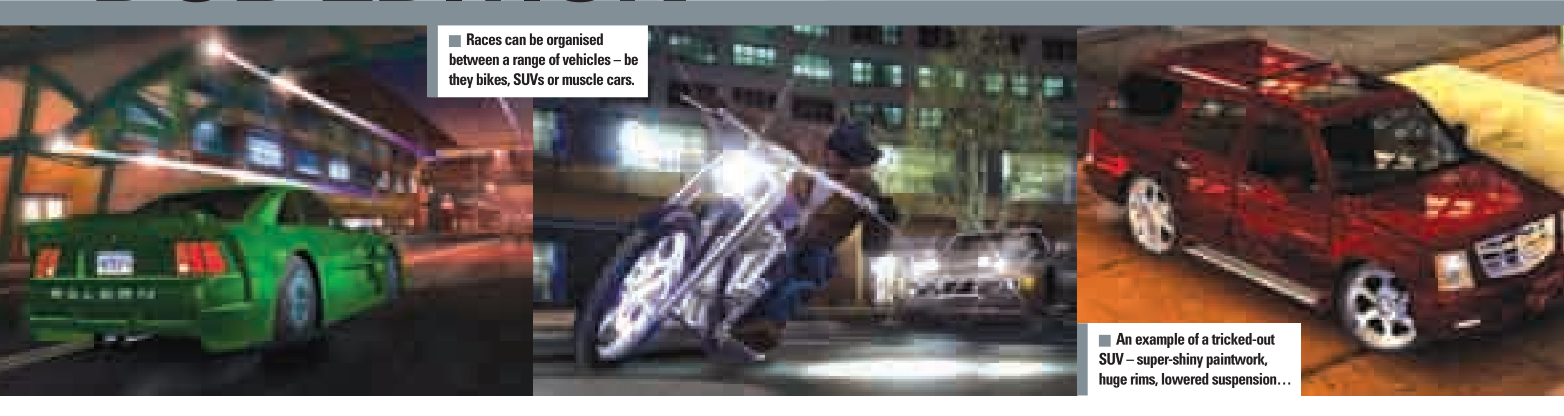
"PLAY THE ROLE OF A HEROIC CAT AND CONTROL TIME TO FACE TOUGH BATTLES AND PUZZLING CHALLENGES"

MICROSOFT PRESS RELEASE

■ After blagging bags of swag, the pigs are less manoeuvrable making them easier to spot.

■ Turrets can be dealt with by slowing time and performing some *Matrix*-esque evasions.

MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION



Races can be organised between a range of vehicles – be they bikes, SUVs or muscle cars.

An example of a tricked-out SUV – super-shiny paintwork, huge rims, lowered suspension…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games
DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
RELEASE: Dec '04
GENRE: Racing
PLAYERS: 1 (Online TBA)

Shiny cars with ludicrous mods and a thing for high speeds? You know it's the only 'automotive lifestyle' choice to make…

SYSTEM'S UP WITH THE TOP DOWN, GOT THE CITY ON LOCK DOWN

Pardon the phrase, but Rockstar Games' latest addition to the *Midnight Club* series, christened *DUB Edition*, is 'all about the bling'. *DUB* itself boasts the dubious honour of being 'America's premiere automotive lifestyle magazine' that not only chronicles but also pioneers what can only be described as 'pimping rides'. And as you might have guessed, it's this concept that forms the basis of Rockstar's new racer.

As is blatantly obvious, customising your ride – be it an SUV such as a Cadillac Escalade, a muscle car like a Ford Torino, or a Hog-style motorbike – is just as important as crossing the finishing line in first place; according to the rules of the pimped road, it ain't worth a thing if it don't got that bling. All manner of light-refractive and pearlescent paint jobs can be applied, ride heights altered, and suspension set at 45-degree angles for the ultimate in lopsided car-based swagger if, indeed, cars can swagger. Rims (hubcaps, for the uninitiated) are also vital to finish off that look – as little tyre as possible is the in thing, we're reliably informed.

Of course, the environments – taking in Detroit, San Diego and Atlanta – are as shiny as the paint jobs. Call it the *Need For Speed Underground* influence if you like, but the difference here is their expansive nature. The light bloom and improbable reflections that suggest that even concrete can be polished rush by at quite a pace; perhaps not quite at *Burnout 3* velocities, though a nitrous boost helps close that gap.

But all the customisation would be for naught if some form of online play wasn't included and, of course, it is. The details haven't been finalised yet, but expect it to build on the apparently freeform rules that players reportedly adopted in *Midnight Club II*, drag racing from landmark to landmark. Handling looks to be at the more arcadey end of the already far-from-simulation genre, and though damage is sustained by vehicles they'll happily plough through lamp posts, shop fronts and other road users without dramatic effect.

With such an onus on the car-customisation aspects of the game, *Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition* runs the risk of seeming as frivolous as many of the rides in *DUB* itself. If, on the other hand, the play modes prove suitably engaging, then the excessive bling may be an amusing complement to the on-road action.

"CUSTOMISING YOUR RIDE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS CROSSING THE FINISHING LINE IN FIRST PLACE"



The neon glow of the cities is most impressive, especially considering the rate at which the game moves.

Although the areas aren't direct re-creations, they're still realistic enough.


eMag

DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

SHE LIVES IN NEW YORK CITY

DEF JAM VENDETTA - 'PROPER' WRESTLING + RAP SUPERSTARS = DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK

"AS ONE OF D-MOB'S CREW IT'S TIME TO STEP UP AND TAKE CROW DOWN. SUCCEED AND THE WORLD IS YOURS. FAIL AND… WELL, YOU DON'T WANT TO FAIL"

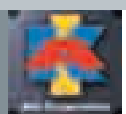
EA PRESS RELEASE

■ Using your surroundings is a key to victory this time around. So do it.

■ From a basic grapple, there are many ways to injure your opponent.

DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK

PLAYSTATION2/MULTIFORMAT



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Founded in 1995 in Tokyo, AKI Corporation is widely accepted to be the leading developer of wrestling titles but its skills now extend beyond that – *Fight For New York* is proving that the Japanese firm can work equally well outside the constraints of traditional grappling.

HISTORY

- **DEF JAM VENDETTA** 2003 [Multi]
- **WWF NO MERCY** 2000 [N64]
- **WCW VS THE WORLD** 1997 [PSone]



We reckon this move is called Fist of Doom. Or Fist of Death. Doesn't really matter…

Crazy Legs lives up to his name by having, um, crazy legs.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan/US
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: AKI Corporation
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Beat-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-4

Clobber the heroes and villains of the urban music scene into submission or just throw them under a moving train. Let's not pretend that most of them don't deserve it…

KICK, PUNCH, BLOCK – I'VE GOT THE FUNKY FLOW

PS2 **Today's rap/R&B scene is a disgrace.** For every decent hip-hop act struggling to get a break, there are a dozen untalented nobodies out to make a quick buck by talking over a beat or writing response songs that air pitiful domestic feuds on a global stage. Considering this regrettable state of affairs, it's amazing how well it will work in EA's favour. Let us explain. Meet Eddie, 16 years old. Dripping in Burberry and Argos 'bling', Eddie likes nothing more than to boot up *Fight For New York* and take on the role of his hero, Sean Paul. Meanwhile, on the other side of town, a wholly more respectable gamer is loading the same game but not for the same reason. Oh no. He's just gagging to push Fat Joe over and watch him roll around like an overturned turtle, or perhaps simply give Busta Rhymes some mo'…

Regardless of your views of the validity of the pugilists' musical careers, there can be little argument against the calibre of *Def Jam*'s line-up. Over 40 household names – from Method Man and Ludacris to Lil' Kim and Carmen Electra – compete in traditional 'first to stop breathing loses' encounters as well as a variety of new events. Our favourite of these so far involves a crowd vote to decide the victor, meaning you'll have a bit more to think about than swinging your fists wildly. The pleas of fans have also been answered – a new Create-A-Player mode means that you can easily play as your own fictional urban superstar or even yourself, which will be particularly enjoyable when dishing out revenge for the irreparable damage that some of the roster have caused your ears.

The fighting styles and their integration into the game have usurped expectations – taking on a wrestling character requires a totally different strategy to dealing with one who uses, say, martial arts. These can even be mixed to make hybrid move sets and every character has their own unique Blazin' move, a match-ending (sometimes career-ending) explosion of violence, the likes of which are seldom seen outside BanDai's *Ultimate Muscle* franchise.

Also impressive is the selection of arenas and fight venues. In a nod to the first game there's still a proper wrestling ring in which grappling purists can do battle, but most of the other settings better embrace *Fight For New York*'s new attitude. Rings of fire, grimy subway stations and crowded bars all take turns at being the house of pain and the amount of interaction therein is particularly special. Whip a foe into the crowd and they'll rough him up a bit before throwing him back; chuck someone into a pillar or a jukebox and the right moves will splatter them straight through it; toss a weakened opponent into the path of a subway train and you'll never have to worry about him topping the charts – or you – again.

We understand that some or all of the game's style, content and attitude may put people off – we had reservations about *Vendetta* before a full play test revealed it to be the solid little brawler on which *Fight For New York* is based. But trust us, such inhibitions don't last, and within a few hours AKI's latest effort should start to make sense in a 'somewhere between wrestling and fighting' sort of way. What we're trying to say here is simple: do yourself a favour and don't overlook *Fight For New York* just because most of the saps that will buy it are the people who believe Eamon and Frankee actually went out with each other.

TALES FROM THE HOOD

While *Vendetta*'s single-player quest was just a series of match-ups lashed together with slight narrative elements and the odd cut-scene, *Fight For New York* promises much more. In an interesting move, many of the bigger names among the licensed cast play roles rather than being themselves. Snoop Dogg, for example, is big underworld playa Crow and it's your goal to take him down. On top of the match modes we've seen, we're promised many more in Story mode – we're particularly looking forward to the *Street Fighter*-inspired stage where we get to write off a rapper's pimped SUV that's worth more money than we'll ever see.

"CHUCK SOMEONE INTO A PILLAR OR A JUKEBOX AND THE RIGHT MOVES WILL SPLATTER THEM STRAIGHT THROUGH IT"

ARMIES OF EXIGO



Huge subterranean battles are very much the order of the day.

HERE'S A STRATEGY TITLE WITH, GASP, A HINT OF ORIGINALITY

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: Hungary
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: Black Hole
RELEASE: Sept '04
GENRE: RTS
PLAYERS: 1-12

With some original ideas and EA's megabucks behind it, *Armies Of Exigo* is expected to do well.

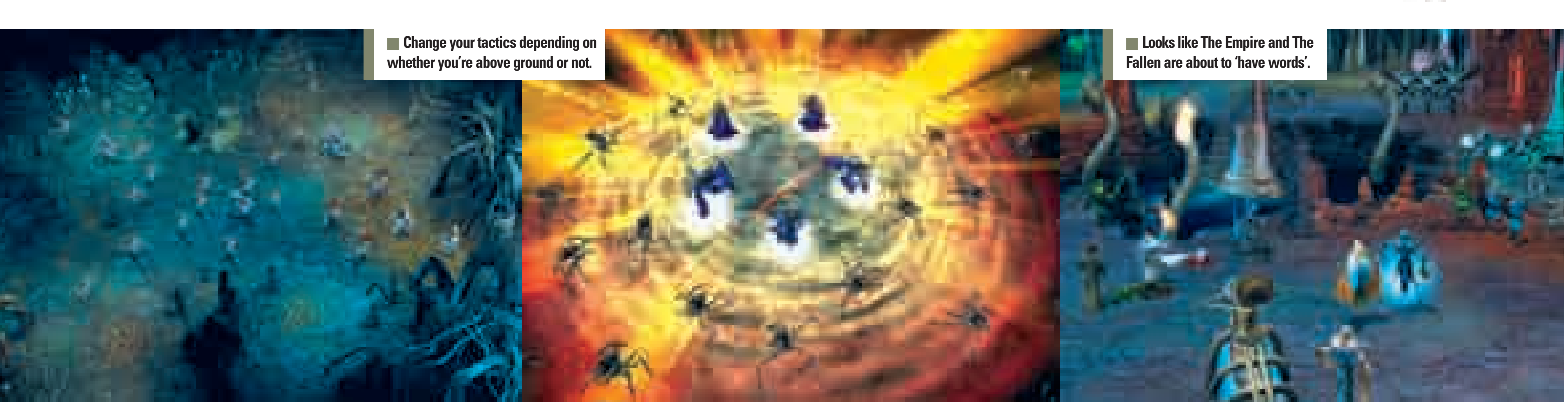
Electronic Arts' plans for world domination look set to continue with an RTS offering courtesy of Budapest-based developer Black Hole, even if first impressions hint otherwise. *Armies Of Exigo* features three races, with players controlling each race for 12 missions in the 36-mission single-player campaign. The three races are made up of gaming's usual suspects – Humans, Elves and other 'light' races are The Empire; Ogres, Trolls and big nasty beasties are The Horde; and Aliens, Dark Elves and Insects make up The Fallen. Black Hole is attempting to ensure that no race has a clear advantage over the others, so the odds are that the 20 or so units available to each race will be pretty similar, with the only differences coming in how they level up (the Empire and Horde do so individually; The Fallen collect experience and level up simultaneously).

So far, so clichéd, so why should the game be worthy of your attention? Well, it seems Black Hole might have pulled off a masterstroke with *Armies Of Exigo* by introducing combat on two levels – above and below ground. Armies can concentrate on fighting on either one or both fronts, which opens up all sorts of skulduggery as a result. You can tunnel under huge enemy defences then send noxious gasses up through porous rock to disable them, while alert gamers can destroy subterranean bases with earthquake spells. If it sounds cool, that's because it is.

> "TUNNEL UNDER ENEMY DEFENCES AND SEND NOXIOUS GAS UP THROUGH POROUS ROCK TO DISABLE THEM"

There's the promise of varied missions in single-player mode, with the emphasis shifting from attack to defence, and some missions will focus on resource gathering too. Multiplayer options are also sounding very promising at this stage, with between 30 and 40 multiplayer maps said to be playable out of the box, with 200 units per side for some pretty gargantuan battles.

The RTS market seems to undergo months of stagnancy interspersed with times where everybody seems to be trying something new. After what can most certainly be described as a long period of the former, it seems the genre is entering an innovative, inventive phase where developers are being rewarded for trying something different – and many elements of *Armies Of Exigo* certainly fit the bill.

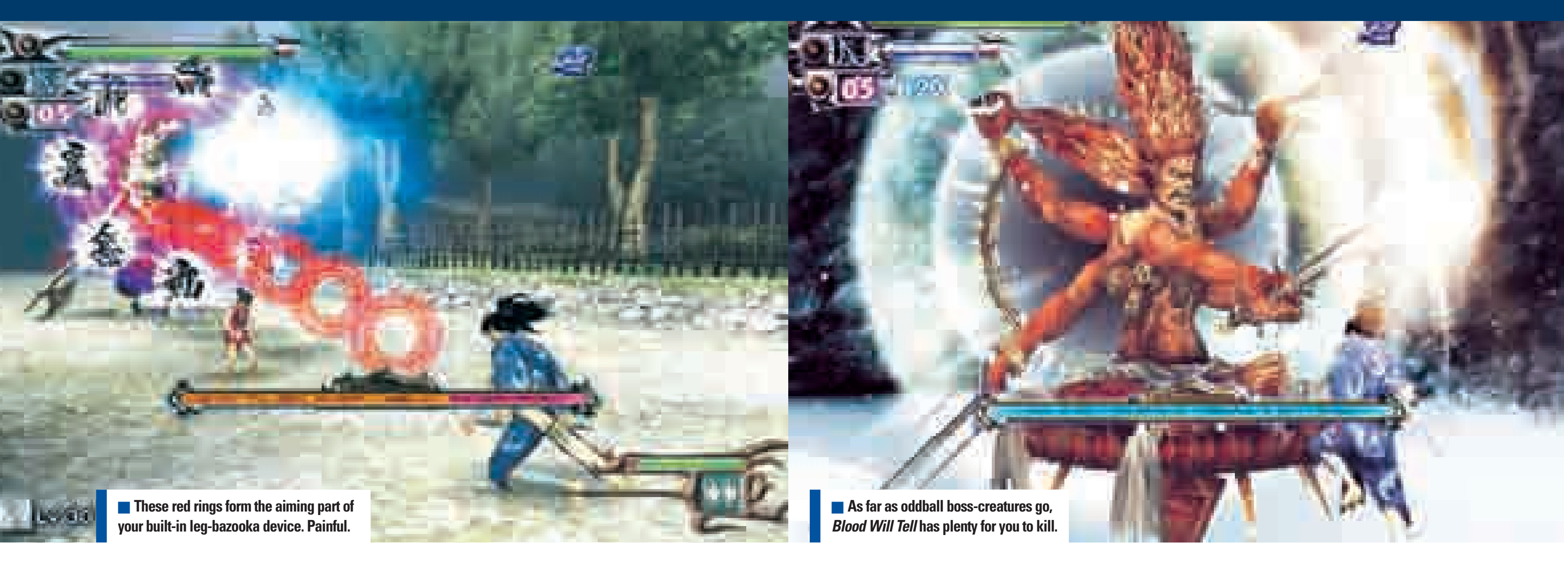


Change your tactics depending on whether you're above ground or not.

Looks like The Empire and The Fallen are about to 'have words'.


eMag

BLOOD WILL TELL



These red rings form the aiming part of your built-in leg-bazooka device. Painful.

As far as oddball boss-creatures go, *Blood Will Tell* has plenty for you to kill.

MEET THE ORIGINAL MAN MACHINE

PS2

We've a lot to thank pirates for. In our youth they gently introduced us to a world of prosthetics and permanent disfigurement. From wooden legs and shiny hooks to eyepatches and golden teeth, we were quickly familiarised with necessary bodily replacements. However, the late manga animation legend Osamu Tezuka's story of Hyakkimaru goes much further. Here we have a man with swords for arms, a machine gun in his elbow and a bazooka concealed within his right knee. Eat your heart out, Captain Hook.

Blood Will Tell is the story of a man robbed of 48 crucial body parts as a newborn child because he fulfilled the first part of an ancient prophecy foretelling the end of the world's evil. By being born as a black second sun appeared in the sky, Hyakkimaru was marked out as the one who would defeat Evil. Evil had to act soon, while Hyakkimaru was young and vulnerable. Unable to kill Hyakkimaru outright, evil spirits chose to remove essential body parts and corrupt his parents, convincing them to abandon him.

Luckily for Hyakkimaru, a talented inventor took him in, fitting him with a range of magical limbs and body parts, not to mention an enviable collection of deadly weapons. Despite becoming adept with his attachments and regardless of the advantages that come with having built-in swords, as Hyakkimaru grew older he felt empty inside and angry at those responsible. Fuelled by desire for revenge and a real body, Hyakkimaru has embarked on a quest to restore his humanity.

> "THE KEY INGREDIENTS ARE IN PLACE, READY TO PRODUCE A STONKING TITLE"

It's certainly an interesting story, but what of the game? Here's where things become much more familiar. *Blood Will Tell* takes the typical form of a roaming 3D slash-athon, where you're simply required to progress through the stages killing squads of demons and monsters (of which over a hundred exist). Other standard elements include an on-screen map to aid your negotiation of the stages, curiously placed chests bestowing items essential to your survival, and large end-of-level bosses.

Obviously, it's the action, the killing and the weaponry being showcased here, not originality. And this doesn't have to be a bad thing. The action is very easy to get into with players able to pull off a variety of combos and moves quite quickly, making the most of your built-in armoury. A special charge move is available, where once connected with your opponent you have to follow an on-screen combination of button presses in order to kill your enemy in one go and earn a satisfying cut-scene.

As you progress through the badlands, you'll collect items and orbs, though the most important element is your Spirit Meter. This builds up what is, in essence, a power bar that, when full, gives you the ability to unleash extra hard attacks on surrounding enemies. As with most power moves of this type, they can't be done often, so should be saved for near-death moments and boss confrontations.

At this stage *Blood Will Tell* looks promising, if in slight danger of becoming a wasted opportunity. The key ingredients are in place, ready to produce a stonking title: the game has over a hundred different monsters, there's an estimated 20 hours of gameplay and, most importantly, you get to control a man who has swords for arms. However, the progression structure, level design and what your character can actually do require a bit of work. What we've played is fun, but in a seen-it-all-before sort of way. Whether *Blood Will Tell* impresses is all down to what it has up its sleeve, and with Hyakkimaru involved, that could be anything.

SPECIAL FRIEND

During the game a young girl by the name of Dororo will accompany you. She boasts of being a thief and after trying to steal something from you, decides to join up and risk her limbs to save yours. For the most part, Dororo runs around helping you fend off enemies, with you having limited control over her via a panel that allows you to bark orders. Occasionally, though, you'll have to take full control of her to progress through areas that only her petite frame and nimble movements can negotiate. Interestingly, if you have a willing friend, they can control Dororo, allowing for some co-operative gaming.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Sega
DEVELOPER: Sega Wow
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-2

Robbed at birth of his natural limbs, Hyakkimaru has swords for arms and a bazooka in his leg – but like Pinocchio, all he wants is to be a real boy.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Sega Wow has been a crucial arm of Sega's home-console strategy, developing a range of games spanning all current platforms. Among the projects currently being developed by Sega Wow is a remake of the well-known Mega Drive game *Altered Beast*. All together now: "Rise from your gwave!"

HISTORY

- **SEGA GT ONLINE** 2004 [Xbox]
- **SHINOBI** 2003 [PS2]
- **SEGA GT 2002** 2002 [Xbox]

■ Using combinations like this, it's possible to kill your opponent in one go.

■ Quick! Run away! It's a, um, it's a… Oh, just run away really fast.

"BLOOD WILL TELL DELIVERS THE ULTIMATE SAMURAI FIGHTING EXPERIENCE WITH INTENSE 3D ACTION"
SEGA WOW PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

PART MAN, PART TANK

ONIMUSHA x EDWARD SCISSORHANDS + ROBOCOP = BLOOD WILL TELL

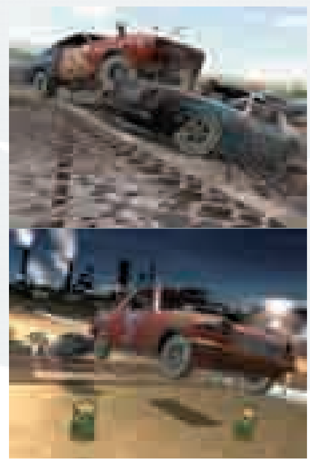
SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

Test Drive: Eve Of Destruction

BANG GOES THE NO CLAIMS BONUS

Format: PS2/Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Monster Games
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-4



Considering that past *Test Drive* games have been traditional rigid racing affairs, *Eve Of Destruction* couldn't be more of a detour. Placing itself firmly in the dirt tracks of titles like *Destruction Derby*, the game sees you try 25 different events, all of them focused on wanton destruction and unorthodox vehicles such as school buses, taxis and hearses. With modes such as Gauntlet (race a set number of laps without letting the other cars destroy your vehicle), Demo Derby (where everyone tries to destroy each other's cars) and Trailer Race (race around with a trailer attached, which everyone tries to destroy), it's not hard to see a pattern emerging – hopefully, though, it should still prove to be a solid racer.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '04

The Urbz: Sims In The City

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Format: PS2/Xbox/Cube/GBA
Origin: US
Publisher: EA Games
Developer: Maxis
Genre: Life Simulation
Players: 1



It had to happen some time. Thanks to the onset of 'bling' culture, *The Sims* has gone street. With *The Urbz* (yes, we see what Maxis has done there), EA is taking the life simulation genre in a new direction by giving the series attitude. Success is no longer determined by the happiness of your characters, but by their reputation; the better it is, the further you'll see your creations grow until they become big-time players in the city. How you look, what you do and even where you live affects how you'll progress through the game, so it looks like reaching the top won't be as easy as it has been before. But with *The Sims 2* also out, will the fans go for this?

RELEASE DATE: NOV '05

Kessen III

NOW WITH ADDED DRAMA, APPARENTLY

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Koei
Developer: In-House
Genre: Strategy
Players: 1



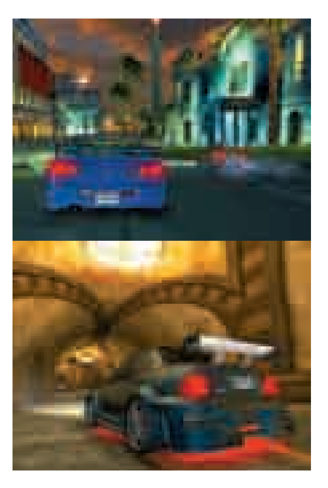
Feudal Japan isn't a new setting for videogames, but it's one that has paid dividends for Koei. Of course, while *Dynasty Warriors* has always focused on the more action-oriented side of things, the *Kessen* series is a more traditional slice of strategy action – but with *Kessen III* just over the horizon, Koei is doing its best to try to bring the player even closer to the tactical action. The big change is the enhancement of the control system, which now sees players being able to command individual troops as well as whole units of soldiers. Combine this with twice as many battles as the previous game and over two hours of cinematics, and we reckon that fans of the series and newcomers alike will be more than satisfied.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 '05

Need For Speed Underground 2

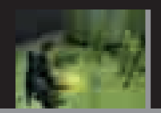
BLING AND YOU'LL MISS IT

Format: PS2/Xbox/Cube/PC
Origin: Canada
Publisher: EA Games
Developer: EA Canada
Genre: Racing
Players: 1-4



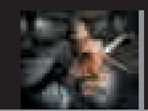
As 'bling' becomes the latest fashion accessory for racing games these days, it's getting harder to tell each title apart. Huge free-roaming cities where races can happen at any time, tons of after-market parts with which to pimp your ride and a soundtrack that can only be described as 'banging' might be an accurate description of Rockstar's *Midnight Club: DUB Edition*, but it also sums up *Need For Speed Underground 2* to a tee. Naturally, then, the question must be asked: who's going to cross the finishing line (or the girl waving a chequered hankie) first? With both developers known for their high production values, it could be a close call when gamers decide in November.

RELEASE DATE: NOV '04



Canned Dead Rush [Multi]

■ Talk about timing – no sooner than last month's issue (featuring a preview of Activision's zombie-based action driving title on these very pages) went to press, the game's development was halted. Typical.



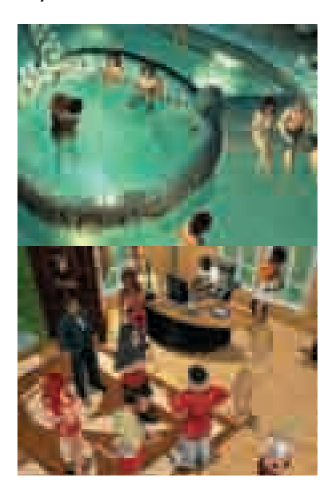
S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow Of Chernobyl [PC]

■ Another huge slip, this time for the game that, according to THQ, 'is well positioned to redefine FPS gaming.' Don't expect to be raiding the ruins of Chernobyl until the end of 2005.

Playboy: The Mansion

GETTING DOWN IN THE GROTTO

Format: PS2/Xbox/PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Cyberlore
Genre: Life Simulation
Players: 1



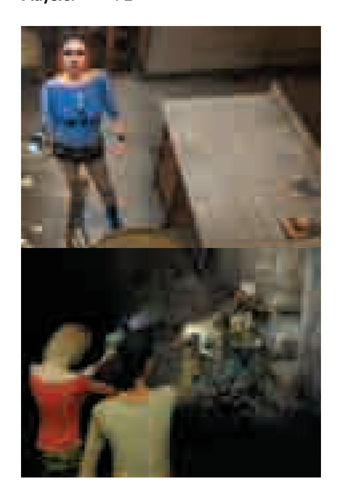
Gamers may want it, but *Singles: Flirt Up Your Life* has already proved that adding sex to a *Sims*-style concept can be messy. Thankfully, *Playboy: The Mansion* puts the idea into perspective by having you play the part of a virtual Hugh Hefner. Starting from scratch, it's your job to build up the Playboy empire as well as create your very own mansion along the way and keep the readers of your magazine happy. Despite the rather obvious connotations that the name implies, it seems there's more depth to *Playboy: The Mansion* than you might expect. So long as this steers clear of the smut value cherished by Koch's effort, *The Sims* might finally have some valid competition.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '04

Obscure

SCARING IT, OLD SCHOOL

Format: PS2/Xbox
Origin: Germany
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Microïds
Genre: Survival Horror
Players: 1-2



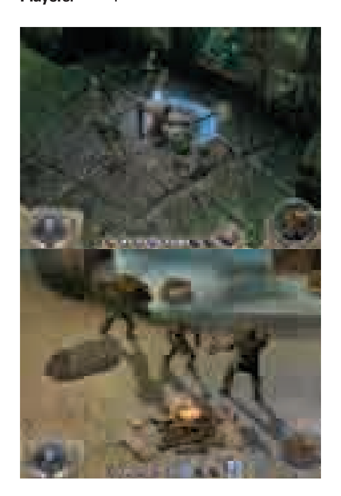
When it comes to survival horror, the problems for developers are twofold: making it scary and creating something innovative. While taking advantage of the popularity of teen horror films might seem rather obvious, then, *Obscure* at least does something right by allowing players to control two characters at once. Yes, so *Resident Evil Zero* did it first, but the difference here is that not only does each of the five characters available have different special abilities (enhanced healing, powerful attacks and so on), but a second player can also drop in whenever they like to take charge of the other character. The results require co-operation and help create even more tension, which should boost the game no end.

RELEASE DATE: OCT '04

Fallen Kingdoms

KNOW YOUR ROLE PLAY, MISTER

Format: Xbox/PC
Origin: US
Publisher: TBA
Developer: Warthog Texas
Genre: RPG
Players: 1



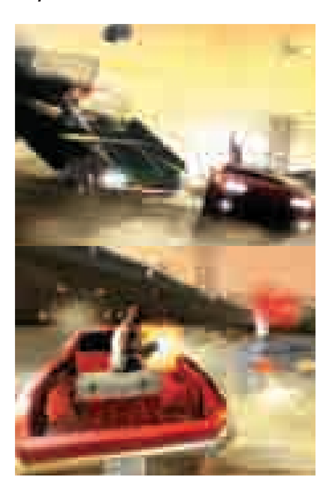
It's sometimes hard to get excited about RPGs these days, especially when they all sound the same. Take Warthog's upcoming role player, *Fallen Kingdoms*, for example. Set in the dark and dangerous land of Aegion, a great evil has blighted the country thanks to the rise of Undrath the Wraith Lord and only you can save the day. Hardly inspiring, we're sure you'll agree, but then the promise the game will offer a huge 3D world packed with advanced visual effects, reactive combat choreography during battles and even a morality system that changes the path of the game depending on your actions isn't anything new either. Here's hoping we'll have a reason to get excited about this soon…

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

Notorious: Die To Drive

TIME TO GO GANGSTA TRIPPIN'

Format: PS2/Xbox
Origin: France
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: In-House
Genre: Action Racing
Players: 1-4



Yes, that's right – it's another game with street culture at its core. However, *Notorious: Die To Drive* has us torn between two camps; on one hand, Ubisoft's internal teams have produced some really great titles in the last year, and yet some of us are arguing over how this game's mixture of racing, urban warfare and a hip-hop soundtrack is nothing more than obvious bandwagon jumping. With over 30 cars, more than 20 weapons and 45 different stages (set across seven game modes), it's clear that Ubisoft is at least putting a lot of effort into the gameplay rather than just coating it in the current street fad. Fingers crossed, this one might actually be worth playing after all.

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '05



Final round… fight! **IK+ Commodore 64 [System 3] 1987**

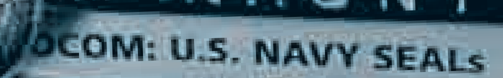

LV TIME
2000 02 WHITE
BLUE WINS
WHITE AND RED ARE
EQUAL SECOND PLACE

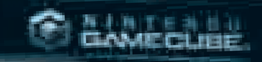
YOUR MOTHER WOULDN'T LIKE IT

SCAREMONGERING IS NOTHING NEW. **VIOLENT MOVIES, VIDEO NASTIES,** GANGSTA RAP – THE POPULAR PRESS LOVES TO BLAME SOMETHING FOR SOCIETY'S ILLS. BUT THE RECENT FURORE OVER **MANHUNT** TOOK TABLOID HYSTERIA TO A NEW LEVEL. **WHY ARE GAMES SO VILIFIED?** WILL THIS DAMAGE THE INDUSTRY? AND IS THERE A CHANCE THAT THE **MEDIA MIGHT BE RIGHT** WHEN IT SAYS WE'RE BEING TURNED INTO **KILLERS**…?

We're all aware of the controversy surrounding the tragic death of Stefan Pakeerah. Fourteen-year-old Stefan was killed by 17-year-old Warren LeBlanc in February in an attack that Pakeerah's mother claims was driven by LeBlanc's 'obsession' with *Manhunt*. No sooner did Mrs Pakeerah call for a ban on violent games than the press began a campaign against gaming. "Horror images on computer drove teenager to kill his friend," said the *Daily Mail*. Other papers joined the cause, sending under-age children into games stores in an attempt to buy 18-rated games, and offering cod-psychology verdicts on a range of 'mature' titles.

Leicestershire Police have said there was no link between *Manhunt* and the murder, and that LeBlanc's motive was robbery in order to pay off a drug debt. So why did the press expend so much energy attacking the games industry, when it could have targeted drugs? Some have blamed the silly season, a period in the summer where there is little to report so papers 'massage' stories to feed sales. "This classic slice of silly-season fodder paid scant attention to the facts of the case… and owed everything to the understandably ▷


parents demand action over horrific images
BAN THESE EVIL GAMES
MANHUNT
SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALs
Grand Theft Auto Vice City
Grand Theft Auto III
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell® Pandora Tomorrow
Red Dead Revolver
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3
Grand Theft Auto Double Pack


NINTENDO
GAMECUBE.


18









YOUR MOTHER WOULDN'T LIKE IT

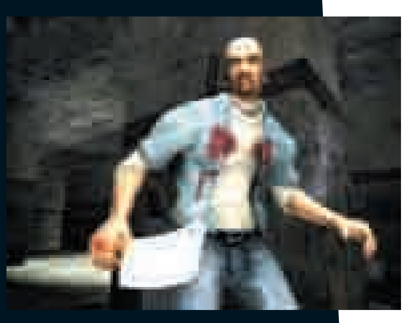
emotional statements by Pakeerah's parents," said games industry trade magazine *MCV*. The *Daily Mail* portrayed certain games as software that trained killers – not so much a story as targeting an element of entertainment media for the purpose of stirring up sales. Tim Wapshott, software editor at *The Times*, is unsurprised by the *Mail*'s article. "The *Mail* and hysteria have always been long-standing bedfellows and the *Daily Mail* struggles harder than most to comprehend the games market," he says.

The 'outing' of violent games by tabloids has also raised the question of where newspapers get their gaming facts. The *Mail* reported on the content of *Doom 3*, even though the game was unreleased at the time. "I often ask myself how and where many of our competitors get their insights into games, since any news stories are often riddled with pretty obvious mistakes, errors and omissions," says Wapshott. The *Daily Mail* was unavailable for comment.

KILLOLOGY

Of course, there may be a possibility that the *Mail* was right when it asked if LeBlanc was "trained to kill by [a] computer game". Academics are still divided over whether

> "Though humans have wanted to wage war and kill each other for ages, only a small percentage can manage it"



The graphic images in *Manhunt* have been accused of influencing Warren LeBlanc's violent actions.

violent videogames can affect people, but a former American serviceman believes it is possible to train people to kill, and that the media plays a big part in this. Retired Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman works on a theory called 'Killology'. Also a professor of military science, he uses his theory to explain how humans can be conditioned to overcome their in-built aversion to killing their own kind and how the media is teaching us to do the same.

Grossman claims that what's important is the relationship between the midbrain and forebrain. The midbrain deals with instinct, while the forebrain handles rational thought. When someone gets angry or scared, the midbrain takes over, bringing subconscious reactions to the fore, though not the ability to kill. According to Killology, humans can reprogram their midbrain response through exposure to certain 'training', designing new responses to threatening situations and giving us the ability to kill.

Grossman claims that only 15-20 per cent of soldiers questioned during World War II said they could bring themselves to fire directly at exposed soldiers. "It's a phenomenal insight into human nature, but when the military became aware of that, it systematically went about the process of trying to fix this problem," explains Grossman on his website, www.killology.com. Four techniques were used to change soldiers into killing machines (see the 'Killing unnaturally' boxout) and Grossman believes there's a link between these methods and the effects of modern media.

If he's right, then if someone with criminal ideas rattling around inside their forebrain finds himself in a situation to carry them out, being able to do so could be a result of playing videogames. Games are not the only activity able to condition people to shoot at other humans – water pistols or paintball could play a part too – but when you discover that even Nintendo gave the military a helping hand, it's hard to write off games as a possible influence. "In 1991, the US Army used its own marksmanship training software on the Nintendo SNES," explains Shelly Pearce, head of European PR for Nintendo. "This training software was developed by a software company in Utah specifically for the US ▷

KILLING UNNATURALLY

THE ARMY USED A COMBINATION OF THESE FOUR TECHNIQUES TO TEACH SOLDIERS HOW TO KILL, AND NOW THE MEDIA COULD BE DOING THE SAME TO US…

DESENSITISATION & BRUTALISATION

IN THE ARMY: As soon as a soldier arrives in the army he is verbally and physically abused. Specially trained professionals take turns to shout at and break soldiers while forcing them to endure hours of running and constant exercise. Soldiers have their heads shaved, are forced to shower together, sleep together and wear the same clothes, losing their sense of individuality. This is brutalisation. It's designed to break down a person's set of norms and rules, leading to the acceptance of new values embracing aggression, destruction and violence, resulting in a desensitised view of violence in general. The soldier eventually accepts violence as a way of life.

MEDIA THREATS: TV, FILMS: Along with the parents, a TV will be a young child's first real influence. It shows and explains the outside world and helps form their impressions of it. While not full-on brutalisation, TV and films can desensitise children to acts of violence via repetition, causing children to treat certain acts of violence as being a normal, acceptable part of life. Also, learning that aggression can be rewarded allows a child to add aggression to its repertoire of ways to get what it wants.

OPERANT CONDITIONING

IN THE ARMY: Using repeated routines of engagement and simulation, operant conditioning changes what's programmed into the subconscious response, effectively overcoming the filters previously placed there. In World War II soldiers practised by firing at circular 'bulls-eye' targets, now soldiers fire at human-shaped targets that pop into view. In 1991 the US army used a computer simulation machine that ran on Nintendo's SNES hardware to train troops. Soldiers learned to overcome the natural resistance to pulling the trigger on another human by repeating the action of aiming and firing at human shapes in practice.

MEDIA THREATS: VIDEOGAMES: Videogames require participation so are the only medium capable of allowing players to reprogram their built-in resistance to killing. Shooting or beating characters over and over again programs this reaction into a person's midbrain, allowing them to go into these motions in real life should they ever find themselves in a situation resembling the games they've played.

CLASSICAL CONDITIONING

IN THE ARMY: Classical conditioning is a way of teaching a person to associate one thing with something else. In the Japanese military, soldiers were forced to execute Chinese prisoners. Those who did not were shot, while those who agreed were treated to delicious meals, alcohol, women and the respect of their peers and (normally hostile) superiors. The result: they learned to associate killing with pleasure.

MEDIA THREATS: TV, FILMS, MUSIC, VIDEOGAMES: TV and films are often watched while eating snacks, allowing viewers to associate violence with enjoyable tastes. Music can talk about murder over catchy beats and uplifting tunes, while games give players a feelgood factor when sections are completed using violence.

ROLE MODELLING

IN THE ARMY: Humans take after other humans – they look to others for inspiration and reassurance. A child will copy his parents or siblings. What a child finds acceptable behaviour will depend on what their role models find acceptable. In the army – after brutalisation and desensitisation has kicked in – a soldier sees his drill sergeant (an embodiment of aggression) as a role model and begins to follow their lead.

MEDIA THREATS: TV, FILMS, MUSIC, BOOKS: The media is full of role models who put thoughts and ideas into our minds. TV, film and music give us personalities and characters we can relate to and imitate, while books can be influential in building a person's beliefs and providing a person with ideas.

GAMES TO DIE FOR

"IN YOUR HIGH STREET, **A WORLD OF HORROR**" SAYS THE DAILY MAIL. NINE GAMES THAT COULD **MAKE YOU A KILLER…**

MANHUNT

PUBLISHER: Rockstar
RATING: 18

Manhunt, the game that started the media frenzy and undoubtedly one of the most morally reprehensible games we've ever played. Newspapers described it as, "the most violent and amoral videogame ever made." And to be fair, it's not something we disagree with. We don't think that it "drove" Warren LeBlanc to kill, but it's not something we really want to play, or defend. Devoid of complex gameplay, you simply perform the required function so you can watch another grizzly murder. Why's that fun?

HITMAN: CONTRACTS

PUBLISHER: Eidos
RATING: 16+

There's more to *Hitman: Contracts* than gore and its ragdoll physics. It's a game about planning, stealth and precision – you need to think beyond just walking up behind someone, pressing a button and watching them die in a really horrible way. Presumably, it's on the *Daily Mail's* list because you take control of an assassin who murders for a money, and instead of a BBFC 18 rating it's been given a suggested 16+ tag, opening up the morally dubious world of contract killing to under-18s.

GRAND THEFT AUTO

PUBLISHER: Rockstar
RATING:18

It's Rockstar again, the daddy of crime "simulators". We all know about *Grand Theft Auto III* and its Eighties-themed sequel, *Vice City*. We all know you can lure prostitutes into your car with the promise of money, only to beat them up afterwards in order to get it back. And with *GTA: San Andreas* imminent, the killing will continue. As will the high sales.

THE SUFFERING

PUBLISHER: Midway
RATING:18

Published by Midway, the people who brought you the once controversial *Mortal Kombat* series, *The Suffering* is pure blood and killing. It's dark and gruesome. The *Daily Mail* describes the game pretty succinctly: "Players fight to stay alive in an evil maximum security prison… To escape, players must carry out vicious executions while unfortunate fellow prisoners are regularly seen slashed to death." There's not a lot more to add really. Gameplay? What gameplay?

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

PUBLISHER: Epic/Atari
RATING:16

Unreal Tournament features little blood and gore – being gruesome and offering realistic depictions of death isn't its aim. Players look unique in that special alien way they often do in games and PC gamers meet online to shoot each other in a variety of deathmatch arenas using an array of powerful weapons. This doesn't deserve to be on the same list as games such as *Manhunt* and *The Suffering* – this title's intent is of a completely different nature, being more sporting than murderous.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II

PUBLISHER: Raven
RATING: 18

Soldier Of Fortune is fairly unpleasant. You take special care and attention to blow away your enemies' arms and legs and you can also watch in awe as slash marks appear on bodies as you crouch and carve up your fallen foe. Other than that it's a standard first-person shooting game, but, understandably, not one parents will want their children playing.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

PUBLISHER: Rockstar
RATING:18

Also from Rockstar (that's three games it's managed to get on this list), *State Of Emergency* is complete lawless nonsense. It's not graphically harrowing, preferring to use a cartoony graphical style to literally get away with murder, but the intent is quite unpleasant. Players are often required to simply mow down hordes of pedestrians with machine guns and use characters' dismembered limbs to beat other characters to death. Nice.

DOOM 3

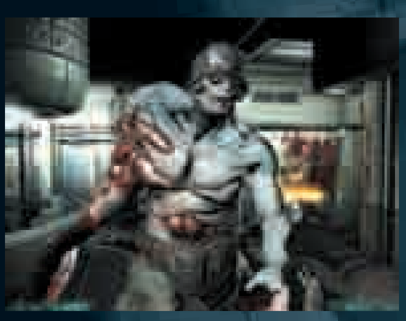
PUBLISHER: id Software
RATING:18

Not yet released at the time of the *Daily Mail's* article, but already on its danger list purely because it is the second game to follow up the original *Doom* which was cited as being responsible for the infamous Columbine school shootings. *Doom 3* also attempts to produce some of the most gruesome-looking enemies yet seen in a videogame but it's unlikely that gamers would find them more disturbing than creations you'd see in a more cerebral horror game like *Silent Hill*.

THE GETAWAY

PUBLISHER: Sony
RATING: 18

Sony's answer to *GTA* features an abundance of violence and unnecessary bad language. The *Mirror* says, "Necks are broken, people are shot… innocent bystanders are killed." However, instead of requiring the player to become someone wishing to climb the gangster ladder, *The Getaway* begins with the kidnapping of the main character's son, establishing the player's motive as rescue.



The enemies in *Doom 3* are clearly fantasy creations, not people.

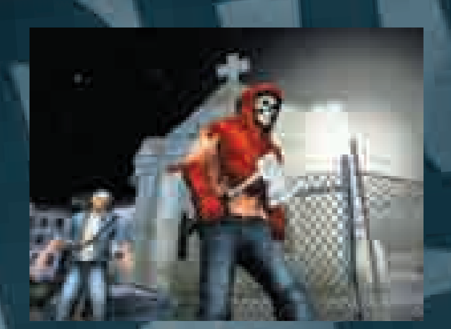
Army, and was never marketed to the general public." While this software never went public, it's hard to imagine it being dissimilar to the gun games you see in arcades. And if the military is confident in using videogames to train its troops to kill, it becomes hard for publishers to deny they have the ability to do the same thing to gamers.

THQ's *Full Spectrum Warrior* began life as a US Army training tool. However, a spokesman for the publisher denies that the aim of the game is to teach people to kill. "Whilst *Full Spectrum Commander* was created to help train the US military, its purpose was to help the army practise battleground strategies," he says. "The program was never designed to improve weapons handling, teach soldiers how to kill or to increase a soldier's aggression level – the player of either version of the game cannot actually fire a weapon themselves."

Even if these games are designed to stimulate tactical thinking rather than a desire to kill, there is an undeniably violent aspect to them, which is cause for concern when children get their hands on these titles. "At [18 months] a child can watch something happening on television, and then they can mimic that action. But it isn't until they're six or seven years old that the part of the brain kicks in which lets them understand where information comes from." Grossman explains. "They are developmentally, psychologically, physically unable to discern the difference between fantasy and reality." This is why we have age ratings – to stop youngsters being exposed to material that may scare or upset them, or that they may not be able to accept as fiction. And it seems that the only worthwhile issue to have been raised by the media *Manhunt* circus is that of how easy it is for children to obtain unsuitable games.

THINK OF THE CHILDREN

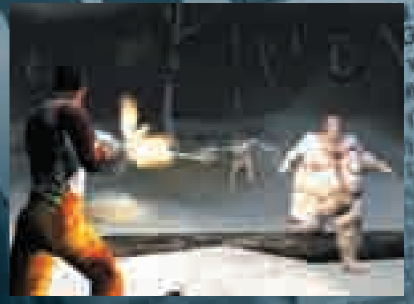
There are many ways for kids to get hold of inappropriate software – from friends, the internet or through piracy – but the papers' biggest concern was shops failing to recognise when 18-rated games were being bought illegally. Many stores were caught out by papers sending in under-age children to buy 'mature' games. Some stores – namely Dixons and Game – even pulled *Manhunt* from the shelves, while others like HMV kept their stock out. "HMV firmly believes that it really isn't the job of the



Manhunt's 'violence for violence's sake' hides shallow gameplay.



Realistic weaponry and wounds are clearly problematic.



Is there enough of a divide between fantasy violence and realism?

retailer to censor what the public should be allowed to buy," says Neil Martin, head of games at HMV. "It may not have occurred to those people calling for the game to be banned from high-street stores that all they were doing was making it more desirable among the very groups they were trying to 'shield'."

It's surprising so many retailers were caught out considering the penalty for mis-selling age-restricted games is a fine of up to £5,000 or up to six months in jail. But will anyone go to prison for selling *Manhunt* to a child? "So far no jail sentences have been imposed although it is technically possible," says Laurie Hall, secretary general of the Video Standards Council. "As a result of recent media coverage there is now a very distinct risk that trading standards officers will start using teenagers aged 15-17 to attempt test purchases of 18-certificate games." It seems proper reinforcement of age ratings is required if retailers are to take them seriously. Game is already making changes. "We have re-issued training procedures, and revised modules within our training schedules," says Lisa Morgan, deputy chief executive of Game. "We've also put posters in the stores asking customers not to be offended if we ask them to prove their age."

Developers and publishers also need to change. While it's easy to hide behind age ratings, publishers need to monitor where 18-rated games are advertised so they're not accused of deliberately marketing mature games to children. They also need to stop courting controversy in order to shift units. "I recall Max Clifford's office ringing a few years back to suggest a little hysterical coverage was warranted for a 'terrible' game called *Grand Theft Auto* – which the mighty PR had been hired to promote," recalls Tim Wapshott.

The games industry can't have it both ways – if it fires up controversy, it can't complain when unwanted publicity comes along. If games are to become as widely accepted as, say, films or music, the industry needs to realise that while all publicity may be good publicity, it should take everything in moderation.

"The media has desensitised and conditioned every one of us"



Prepare to find a happy place in your head, because your PC is about to take you somewhere very nasty indeed...

Doom 3 100



REVIEWS

THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games**™ is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad we'll make sure you know, if it's great we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.



Occasionally you'll be conveniently told how far ahead your rivals are, adding to the pressure.



It's often necessary to be clever enough to avoid pile-ups happening around and ahead of you.



Smashing into an opponent from behind can sometimes result in a Takedown. Use Boost to help your chances.



The more spectacular the crash, the more reward you earn. You can even slow down time to guide your airborne wreckage into oncoming traffic.

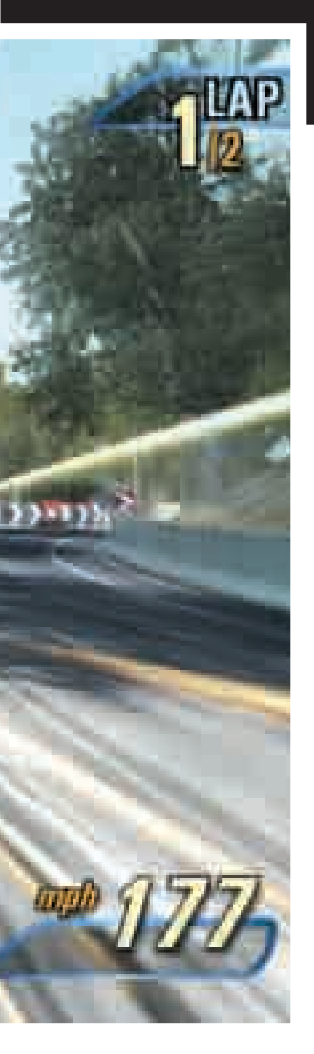
games™

ENHANCED

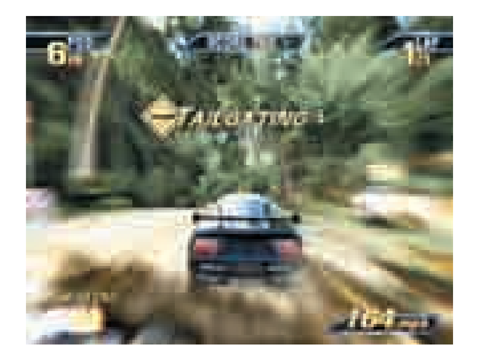
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

VIRTUAL HIGHWAY: Both versions are online, offering six-player racing across multiple modes.

GLOBE TROTTING: *Burnout 3* spans the US, Europe and the Far East.







BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

ACCLAIM WINS THE LOTTERY BUT LOSES THE TICKET – EA IS TONIGHT'S WINNER

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
Criterion

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

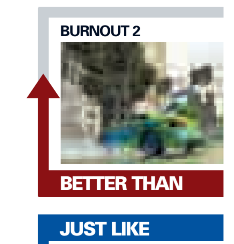
PLAYERS
1-2 (1-6 Online)

If you've already turned to the score, your eyes aren't deceiving you – we really have given *Burnout 3: Takedown* a 10. Occasionally, games come along that require the maximum score. Games that redefine the boundaries of their genres and do everything leagues ahead of their rivals – games that are simply incredible fun to play. *Burnout 3* is special. It's not just another racing game, and despite lacking certain features car enthusiasts hold dear (such as customisation and ultra realism) it's easily the most fun we've ever had with any racing game. From the entertaining but flawed first instalment in the series, through the massively improved sequel with its Crash and Pursuit modes, bigger levels and greater choice of cars, it's hard to believe how far this franchise has come.

The most important change over *Burnout 2* is the introduction of combat and your reliance on it to fill your Boost meter. In the last game, players were discouraged from scuppering the chances of their rivals beyond occasionally nudging them into the path of other vehicles, with the emphasis being purely on racing skill – the Boost meter was filled via drifting, getting air and weaving through patterns of oncoming traffic. Even though this still plays a part in *Burnout 3* it's impossible to quickly fill your Boost meter using just these methods. The 'risk equals reward' gameplay is taken to a new level in *Burnout 3* and players need to smash rivals into walls, cars and up into the air in order to gain a massive Boost advantage. After your first 'Takedown' (a successful dismissal of a rival) your Boost meter grows to twice the size. Introduce another opponent to the pleasures of bonnet-to-wall action your meter expands threefold. One more Takedown and the meter quadruples, where it stays until one of your angry rivals decides to return the favour.

And return the favour they will. It's not a case of vague computer-controlled opposition in *Burnout 3*. There's no procession of cars calmly following each other around the tracks here – these guys want to win as much as you and will catch and ram you with as much urgency, and they'll become more intent on doing so with each shunt and knock you give them. Above each car is an indicator stating its race position, the colour of which signifies its anger level. If it's yellow, you've a fair chance they'll leave you alone unless given an obvious and easy opportunity to take you down. However, when cars' indicators reach red you'll notice a more erratic, urgent and aggressive style of driving, where instead of waiting for Takedown opportunities to present themselves, opponents go out of their way to put you into the wall. This level of intense involvement from your rivals combines with the sheer speed and crowded nature of the

BURNOUT 2



BETTER THAN

JUST LIKE

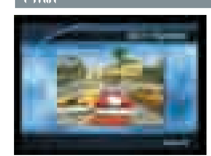


MULTIPLE ORGASMS

TIMELINE HIGHLIGHTS

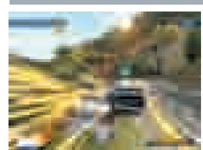
THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE THEM...

1 MIN



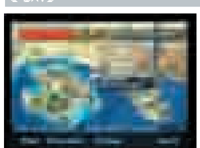
You're presented with an intro movie where an overly enthusiastic American narrator explains *Burnout 3*'s intricacies while annoying you with his peppiness.

5 HOURS



You've played and won races, you've opened up all three continents, you're making big bucks on the Crash Junctions and you see fast-moving cars when you close your eyes.

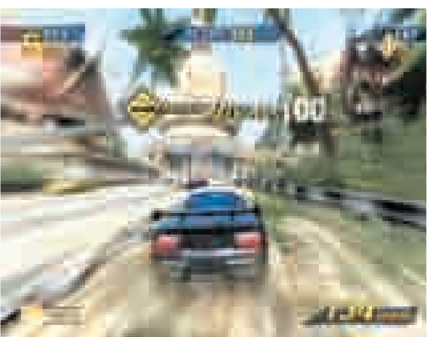
2 DAYS



Thirty per cent in and races are becoming more intense and rivals increasingly fierce. You play online, soon realising it's 5am and you have to be at work in four hours.



Massive mountains, snow-capped trees, loads of cars… these are some of the nicest looking levels on any console.



YOU ARE ELIMINATED

Eliminator is one of the most gruelling and rewarding styles of play in *Burnout 3*. Just as with Race events, you're pitted against five rivals but there is a twist. As each lap is completed, the car at the end of the line gets eliminated from the race. So if you're in sixth place at the end of the first lap, you're knocked out of the race the moment the person in fifth place crosses the line, and so it continues until it's just two of you, battling away on the fifth lap to cross the line first and eliminate the other. Elimination matches get very tough – holding your concentration through long, busy laps to keep yourself in front is a huge test of skill in later levels, really separating the men from the boys.

roads to produce the most dramatic videogame racing experience yet created.

Compared to *Burnout 2*, the size of *Burnout 3* is bewildering. Where *Burnout 2*'s 30 races spanned six US sites, *Burnout 3* boasts 173 events in 10 massive locations over three continents (Europe, the US and the Far East). You start the game with few events available, with more being unlocked as you earn medals in those early events. Bagging medals is also a way to unlock new cars, of which there are around 70, including novelties such as buses and big rigs. As you progress, you'll gradually work up through different car classes (Coupe, Sports, Super), which acts as a learning curve, gradually easing you from fast racing to very, very fast racing. As you'd expect with an arcade-style racing game, the physics are fairly standard, giving you instinctive control and allowing you to apply concentration where it matters most, which is handy considering how much is going on. The last thing people need in a *Burnout* environment is to be worrying about braking correctly to avoid spinning out – dodging traffic requires precision, not realistic understeer. The only factors influencing car performance are speed and weight, with light, fast cars being harder to control, and slower, heavy ones a little less responsive.

Aside from cars and new levels, there's a lot more to unlock, the main set of 'collectables' being the Signature Takedown photos. As well as replays when you crash, you now also see slow-motion visuals of your opponents after you've destroyed them. If you perform a Takedown in specific ways or at certain points in the game your crash replay is snapped and the picture added to your collection. On the subject of crash replays, you now have the option to go into Impact Time when watching them, able to guide your wreckage into the path of oncoming rivals. If you hit them you achieve what's known as an Aftertouch Takedown, another way to earn yourself Boost.

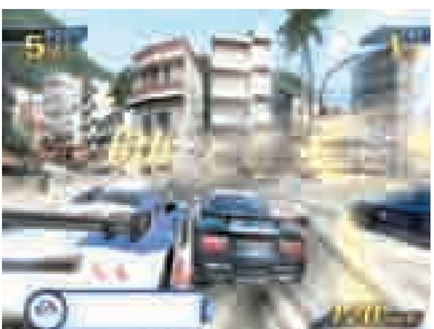
Events include multiple play styles, adding a bit of diversity and ensuring gamers can play for ages without feeling like they're doing the same thing. As well as a slightly updated Crash mode and the spanking new Elimination, players can also indulge in Race (you against five others), Road Rage (achieve a set number of Takedowns within a time limit) and Burning Lap (a modified time-trial game). Variations on these can be taken online, giving you numerous ways to duel it out with real people. And it all works fantastically well. Many games have been illuminated by online play, *Burnout 3* is no exception – it's the icing on an

"NOTHING ELSE WITH FOUR WHEELS CAN MATCH THE PACE, FEROCITY AND SKILL – OR PROVIDE NEARLY AS MUCH EXCITEMENT, SATISFACTION OR IMMERSION – AS BURNOUT 3. IT'S WHAT GAMING IS ALL ABOUT"





■ Look into the distance at all the detail. Do it now, as you won't be able to when playing.



CRASH BOOM BANG

One of the most surprising new elements in *Burnout 2* was the Crash mode. Instead of racing, gamers were encouraged to simply cause the biggest pile-up they could manage. This proved popular, even though the original PS2 version of *Burnout 2* only had 15 Crash Junctions. Noting Crash mode's popularity, Criterion has upped the Crash Junction count to a whopping one hundred for *Burnout 3*, with a few new gameplay enhancements filling them out a bit. The best addition is the Crashbreaker, giving you the ability to detonate your car after impact, causing further damage. Also new are collectable icons that can add extra cash to your total or even double or quadruple your score. Using a combination of Crashbreakers and icons it's possible to gain scores way beyond those required to get Gold medals.

extremely moist cake. Most racing games work well enough, allowing people to merrily race each other, but just imagine how much more involved and furious *Burnout 3* is online, thanks to the need to shunt seven shades of bonnet out of your opposition. Online racing has never been so involving or competitive.

There is so much to *Burnout 3* there isn't room here to list everything and evangelise about why it's all so utterly brilliant. Even if you don't normally like racing games, *Burnout 3*'s immediately accessible nature combined with the sheer fun to be had playing could easily sway you just this once. If not then that's a shame, because an unfortunate gaming preference means you'll be impervious to the wonders of one of the most solid and playable games in existence. For racing purists interested in tuning cars and driving accurate models around real-life courses, *Burnout 3* will still leave room in your heart for something geared more towards your tastes, but this still doesn't detract from the quality of this game or stop it from doing what it sets out to do better than any other game of its type. *Burnout 3* is without a doubt the greatest racing game the world has ever seen. Nothing else with four wheels can match its pace, ferocity and skill or provide nearly as much excitement, satisfaction or immersion. It's a truly magnificent example of what gaming is really about.



VERDICT 10/10
REDEFINES THE ARCADE RACER



■ It briefly gets quiet when ahead of the pack, but expect some shunting to break the silence before long.

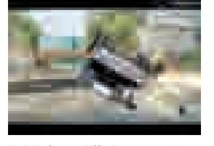
FAQs

Q. SO, NO BOOST CHAINS THEN?
No. Driving quickly, avoiding cars and racking up points has taken a back seat to brutal, vehicular combat.

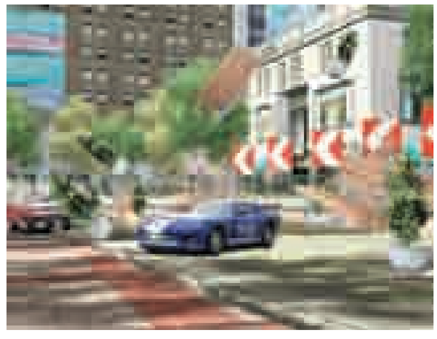
Q. WHERE'S PURSUIT MODE?
Pursuit mode was chasing and smashing up rival cars, which is something you do in *Burnout 3* anyway

Q. WHAT ABOUT MUSIC?
Burnout 3 features loads of decent (mostly rock) tracks from genuine artists, which suitably fit the on-screen action.

XBOX £39.99



Aside from differing control methods (the Xbox uses the triggers to accelerate and brake) and the fact you can listen to your own music, there's practically nothing to separate the two versions. Both are stunning examples of racing perfection.



■ The arcade handling means you don't need to worry too much about technicalities – just try to avoid those shrubs and benches.



■ You'll get plenty of chances to admire the detailed cityscapes as your car soars through the air like a big metal pigeon.



BFG-9000. When you absolutely, positively got to kill every mother in the room, accept no substitutes.



Lighting is one of *Doom's* key scare factors – shadows often creep around corners before their owners do.



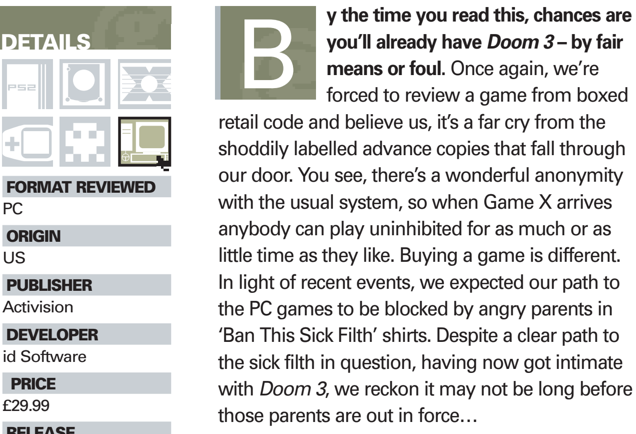
What few 'puzzles' there are play out more like *Crystal Maze* challenges than mission-advancing tasks.



Good idea: Shooting a Chaingun-toting Marine. Bad idea: Doing it from eight inches away.

WE CAN PRACTICALLY SEE THE HEADLINES ALREADY…

DOOM 3



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
id Software

PRICE
£29.99

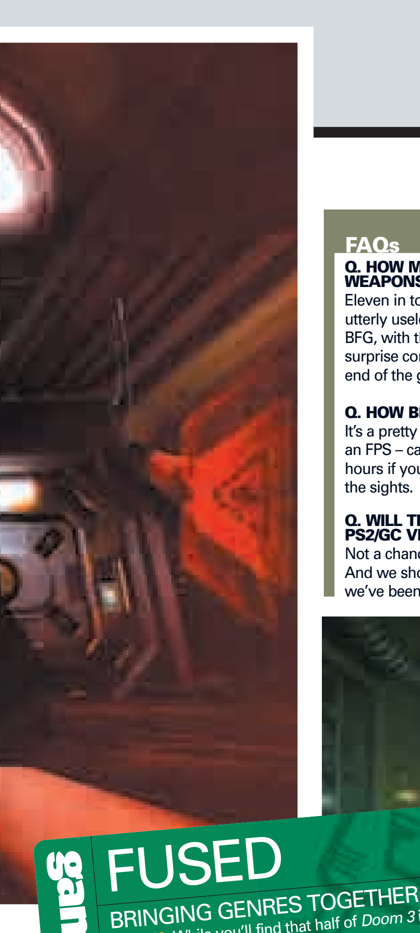
RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1 (1-4 online)

MINIMUM SPECS
Windows 2000/XP, Pentium 4 1.5GHz, 384Mb RAM, 8x CD-ROM drive, 2.2Gb HDD space, DirectX 9.0-compatible sound and graphics cards

By the time you read this, chances are you'll already have *Doom 3* – by fair means or foul. Once again, we're forced to review a game from boxed retail code and believe us, it's a far cry from the shoddily labelled advance copies that fall through our door. You see, there's a wonderful anonymity with the usual system, so when Game X arrives anybody can play uninhibited for as much or as little time as they like. Buying a game is different. In light of recent events, we expected our path to the PC games to be blocked by angry parents in 'Ban This Sick Filth' shirts. Despite a clear path to the sick filth in question, having now got intimate with *Doom 3*, we reckon it may not be long before those parents are out in force…

First off, we'd like to put on our 'state the obvious' hats and say that *Doom 3* is one of the finest looking games that money can buy. Unfortunately, there's a price to pay for such jaw-dropping visuals (aside from the cost of a PC that will run them at a decent rate) and it isn't long before you find that this isn't the rich and believable game world that it seems. It's more a beautiful and disturbing version of Disneyland's Pirates Of The Caribbean ride – sure, it's entertaining but you'll have to keep your hands inside the boat. Bullets and explosions can't tarnish the well-polished environments, the majority of mirrors and windows are indestructible and, aside



FAQs

Q. HOW MANY WEAPONS?
Eleven in total, from your utterly useless fists to the BFG, with the only surprise coming near the end of the game.

Q. HOW BIG IS IT?
It's a pretty long haul for an FPS – call it 15-20 hours if you take in all the sights.

Q. WILL THERE BE A PS2/GC VERSION?
Not a chance in hell. And we should know – we've been there.



What these critters lack in strength they more than make up for in sheer volume.

RED FACTION



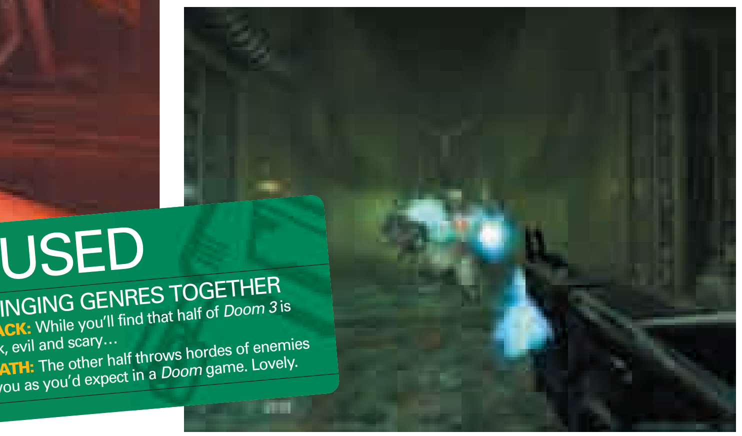
BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN





SYSTEM SHOCK 2





Chainsaws are for cutting down trees. There are no trees on Mars. Discuss.

games™ FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

BLACK: While you'll find that half of *Doom 3* is dark, evil and scary…

DEATH: The other half throws hordes of enemies at you as you'd expect in a *Doom* game. Lovely.

from the occasional crate, there's very little interaction with your surroundings. When games like *Painkiller* and *Far Cry* have struck such a good balance of visuals and interactivity, this bias towards vanity feels slightly wrong.

Also odd are the ways in which the game attempts to scare the player. Granted, there are quite a few moments of genuine shock or panic but all too often it's the possibility of a creature leaping through a door leaving no time for you to avoid taking damage that will be at the forefront of your mind. Add to that the heavily scripted nature of the game and you'll soon come to expect any suspicious switches and equipment to trigger at least a few angry enemies. And you'll usually be right. Still, despite such deep-woven scripting and an occasional reliance on cheap scares, it's difficult not to be drawn in by the drawn-out massacre that is *Doom 3*. The lengthy story is generally well handled, and whether out of primitive bloodlust or genuine absorption there's an unmistakable allure in attempting to scare yourself silly that's likely to see you through to the bitter end.

But while *Doom 3* may be one of the most atmospheric shooters we've ever seen (even if the gameplay follows id's tried and tested formula to the letter), our primary concern is that of replay value. Once again, scripting falls down when you revisit a section of the game and every event happens exactly as last time. Jumpy scares are all but eliminated and the action feels much more stale once you know what dangers await, both on a second play and after reloading a save game. id has always maintained that this is primarily a single-player experience and, a few nice ideas aside, multiplayer does nothing to disprove that statement… not yet, at least. No doubt the mod community will have its wicked way with the shooter and a few wonderful game modes will arise, but for the time being you're better off going solo until the co-op mod surfaces.

Doom 3 is a confused game, veering from *System Shock*-style psychological horror to classic *Doom* mass slaughter via *Resident Evil*-esque jumpy frights. The game starts off at a worryingly slow pace and for the first couple of hours you have to question whether this is *Doom* in anything but name. It's not until your arsenal is about half full that this begins to feel like the new *Doom* game you wanted it to be. This sensation peaks with the collection of that most iconic of armaments, the Chainsaw, and is swiftly followed by a few instances where, for a couple of minutes, the action perfectly captures the feel of id's seminal original. And for those intense and gore-drenched moments alone, *Doom 3* is worth 30 pounds of anyone's money.

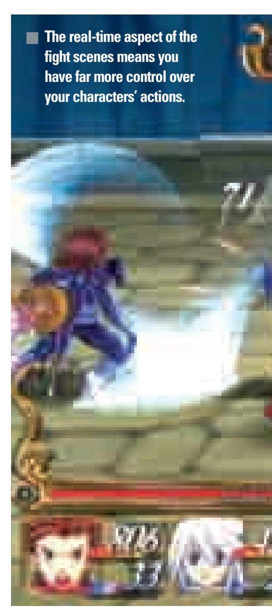
THEY DESERVE GUNISHMENT

The FPS genre has seen so many different weapons over the years that we wouldn't know where to begin to list them, but the fact that *Doom's* arsenal today is nigh-on identical to that of ten years ago is a little saddening. The usual array of Shotguns, Pulse Rifles and Chainguns all see their fair share of action, and for the more sadistic among us, the Chainsaw does a great job of reducing enemies to piles of mush in seconds. Unfortunately, enhancements such as secondary fire modes and melee attacks seem to have fallen by the wayside, and for some reason, the Torch – essential for traversing large chunks of the game – can't be used in conjunction with any other weapon, even the puny Pistol. Obviously, this does add to the suspense but we're sure there are better ways to create tension than by forcing the player to choose between vision and self-defence.

VERDICT 7/10

SLOW TO START BUT SOLID AND ABSORBING AFTER THAT

Not all problems need to be overcome in order to progress; this con artist, for instance, can be bartered with or ignored completely.


The real-time aspect of the fight scenes means you have far more control over your characters' actions.

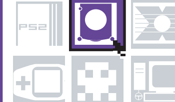
FAQs

Q. HOW BIG?
Absolutely huge. Perhaps not quite the 80 hours Namco promised, but reports are coming in of people finishing it in around 60. Blimey.

Q. COMPLEX?
At first it seems overwhelmingly so, but getting to grips with the huge amount of customisation on offer doesn't take much effort.

Q. VOCAL TALENT?
The voice acting is decent, although it breaks the atmosphere slightly that the lead characters occasionally turn into adolescent Americans, branding each other 'dorks' and complaining that things 'piss them off'.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube (US)

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Namco

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
$49.99

RELEASE
TBA
(Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-4

HEADS YOU LOSE, TALES WE WIN

TALES OF SYMPHONIA

Ascertaining the quality of a role-playing game is never easy. The initial separation of the wheat from the chaff isn't too tough – after all, some RPGs stand out as uninspired dross from the outset – but it's the comparisons between the good ones that are always hard. Perhaps it's because there are no set criteria for what makes a great RPG – with so many things to consider (graphical style, length, plot, characterisation, mechanics, sub-quests and everything in between), it's difficult to find one that excels in a few areas without falling short somewhere else.

With that in mind, it's strange that one of the few recent games to come close to covering all the bases should start out in such a bland and generic way. Indeed, play the first few hours of *Tales Of Symphonia* (the fourth game in Namco's *Tales* series) and you might wonder what all the fuss is about. With initial impressions suggesting an amalgam of previously successful RPGs rather than a standalone entity – a graphical style similar to *Dark Cloud 2*, a combat system evolved from *Grandia 2* and a plot not unlike *Skies Of Arcadia*, albeit without the pirates – *Symphonia* falls neatly into the 'been there, done that' school of RPGs… in the beginning, at least.

Sadly, it's *Symphonia*'s misleading exterior that could prove costly for the game, if only because hardcore RPG players are impatient beasts that bore easily. On the other hand, that the game manages to hide much of its complexity and charm at first is what makes it so magical and enjoyable. Just when you think you've got the game worked out, something else pops up to compel you to venture even further. This isn't to say that *Symphonia* doesn't have things going for it from the off, of course. The visual style, for example, has





SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



DISGAEA: HOUR OF DARKNESS



games™ CONNECTED

EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

PARTY POLITICS: Your basic party during battles always consists of four characters, with three under AI control. However, bring three friends (and pads) along and you can have them help you instead.

TECH WARS

Part of *Symphonia*'s beauty lies in the vast array of experimentation and tactics available during the fight sequences. Each character has their own basic melee attacks, as well as a variety of techniques (or Techs) that offer damaging strikes at the cost of Tech Points. Using the Points or the strikes isn't hard, but the real skill comes from working out how to chain them together – once you get the hang of it, you can flow several basic moves and multiple Tech Attacks into one another with ease. This can be taken one step further with Unison Attacks, which allow you to combine Techs from different characters into even more powerful moves. It takes practice, but the effort is worth it.



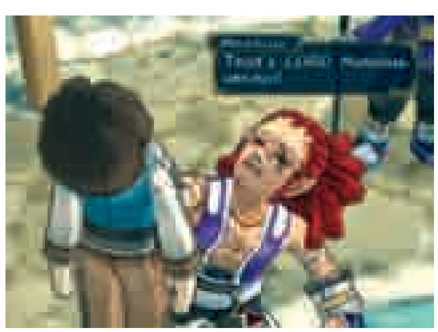


an elegant hand-drawn look that gives virtually all the environments a distinct watercolour feel. Such a style creates a world of deceptive beauty for you to explore, with each locale as unique as the last thanks to a combination of attention to detail and atmospheric music (ranging from haunting melodies to more upbeat traditional RPG fare). But this relatively safe feeling created by the soft-focus graphics and initial stages of the rather obvious 'save the world from certain destruction' story is deceptive when you find out what awaits you…

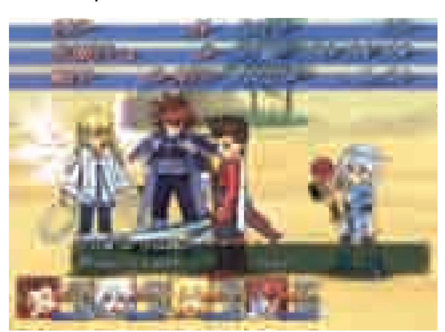
The story – which is almost annoyingly twee to begin with – develops into something far darker, with plot twists happening with alarming (but enjoyable) regularity once you get deeper into the adventure. However, it's through the amount of details, distractions and other additions to the more obvious elements that *Symphonia* builds itself up from what starts as an above-average RPG into one that'll stand as a benchmark in future. Indeed, it's hard at first not to feel a little overwhelmed by this detail, such is the scope of what you can do if you choose to. The battle system, which starts out as an exercise in button-mashing, can soon become a practised combination of timing and memory that allows you to create hugely damaging and impressive combos; and the option to manage your characters' abilities and equipment can evolve into a quest to master and combine EX skills, learn new Tech moves through repeated use of your current ones, customise your old weapons to create new ones and even learn recipes.

The fairly linear path that you start out on quickly branches out into all manner of multiple objectives, sub-missions, optional mini-games and tasks. That the game adapts to your actions in offering this freedom and even provides numerous open-ended possibilities (instead of giving false choices that all lead to the same point, no matter which you pick) is a tiny detail that ultimately brings the most joy – players can have unique experiences depending on what they do, your characters will act differently according to your actions (or lack thereof) and you'll never find an area where something that's said or done doesn't make sense because you missed something earlier.

It's this care and attention that demonstrate Namco's efforts to create a believable and absorbing world you can explore at will, rather than 'just another role-playing game'. While too many examples of the genre are mediocre these days, *Symphonia* stands out as a shining jewel that deserves to be enjoyed by all.



Despite the elegant art style, the storyline is incredibly dark – the evil Desians, in particular, are a force to be reckoned with.

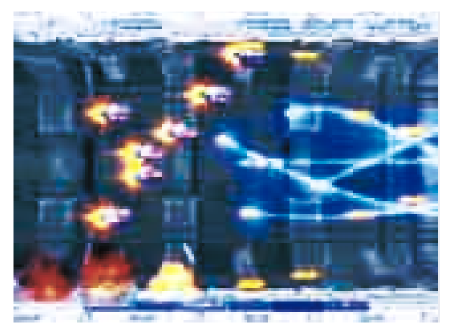


Every stat after a fight has a purpose – improving your grade, for instance, lets you buy rare items later on.



VERDICT 9/10

AN EXQUISITE ADVENTURE OF EPIC PROPORTIONS



A full set of Options looks truly impressive and is very purty to boot.



No, it's not a bad acid trip, this is one of many bosses. Like, man…



games™ ENHANCED

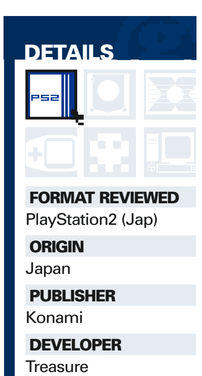
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

SHOOT THE CORE: While it's always obvious what part of the boss is its weak point, being able to hit it is another matter entirely. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again…

TREASURE REINVIGORATES AN OLD CLASSIC

GRADIUS V

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2 (Jap)

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
Treasure

PRICE
¥6,800

RELEASE
TBA (Japan: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2

When *Gradius V* was announced the shoot-'em-up community rejoiced. Here was one of the genre's most precious franchises being handed over to the highly innovative Treasure, creator of some of the most technically amazing titles ever made (*Radiant Silvergun*, anyone?). Needless to say, monumental things were expected of this 'hardcore' union and while the end result is easily the most enjoyable horizontal shooter we've played for some time, its impressive heritage has proved something of a hindrance.

For those who are unaware of *Gradius*'s 19-year legacy, it's time for a brief history lesson. Konami's shooter was the first game of its type to allow you to select power-ups in whatever order you wished. Dispatching certain opponents would create a glowing power orb; once collected, this would highlight one of the six different power-up options at the bottom of the screen. This in itself offered a level of strategy that had never been seen in a shooter before and left the player having to make some very tough choices. Did you power up your Vic Viper craft with less effective weaponry, or hold out for the Lasers and Options (small glowing drones that would mimic your attacks)? Lose a life, however, and you'd say goodbye to all your power-ups (highly frustrating if you were approaching a boss) and have to slowly rebuild your crippled craft.

Treasure has managed to create a game that lovingly pays homage to the original series while adding plenty of new elements that will ensure *Gradius V* is accessible to today's gamers. The most significant change is that it's now possible to reacquire your Options whenever you've lost a life. As fans will know, all the *Gradius* games have always been notoriously tough. This fifth iteration is no exception, so the ability to retain some of your lost firepower is very welcome (and often needed). Of course, masochists can forego all this and simply opt for 'Revival Start', which sees you restarting a level from a certain checkpoint and without your Options whenever a life is lost, although this is far from recommended for beginners.

The regaining of lost Options isn't the only new feature that Treasure has introduced, as *Gradius V*'s Vic Viper is much more durable than previous models. Whereas the collision detection in past games was scarily tight and allowed for little or no error, Treasure's outing is a lot more lax and is all the better for it. Like *Radiant Silvergun*, *Psyvariar* and other popular current shooters, it's now possible for your ship to take a lot more punishment before it finally explodes. This also means that your craft is a lot more manoeuvrable than in previous games as it's now possible to graze other ships and squeeze through tight spaces

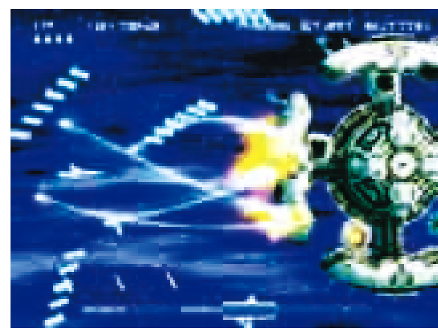
FAQs

Q. HOW MANY LEVELS?
Only six, but once you get to level four, things start getting very tough indeed.

Q. HOW HARD IS IT?
Incredibly so, but the Vic Viper's new hit box means that every time you die it's your fault.

Q. BEST GRADIUS EVER?
Undoubtedly – this is how all remakes should be made. Hopefully, other companies will follow Konami's lead and farm out more projects like this to Treasure

With so much going on at any one time, it's a good job that Treasure has supplied your Vic Viper with such a tiny hit box. You're going to need it



This is easily the most beautiful looking shooter that we've ever played. Don't believe us? Then just look at the screenshots…

without fearing the worst. Considering the game's high difficulty level it's a wise move on Treasure's part, as even the most gifted players will struggle through the game's opening levels – by the time you've reached Treasure's nod to *Salamander* on Level 4 you'll be spending as much time cursing the game's insane difficulty as you are praising its beautiful aesthetics.

Indeed, as far as visuals go, this is by far the most beautiful shooter we've ever seen. Sparks fly as your ship scrapes its way through a narrow passage, enemies explode into a kaleidoscope of luminous light, and volcanoes spew streams of ominous looking bile. Add a dramatic soundtrack that perfectly matches the kinetic on-screen action beat for blistering beat and Treasure has successfully created a new graphical benchmark by which all future shooters will be judged. For all the game's aesthetic splendour, though, we can't help feel that the developer is resting on its laurels. Indeed, in many respects the game's beautiful backdrops share more in common with *Ikaruga* than Konami's seminal title, and while purists may say 'if it isn't broke, don't fix it' the original essence of *Gradius* has been somewhat diluted.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CUSTOMISATION

Before you jet out into space, *Gradius V* lets you choose one of four ship layouts. While most of the differences are extremely minor the ships' Options have been given a dramatic boost, which adds a new wave of strategy to the way you approach the game. A simple press of the R1 button will now let you direct your Options' fire wherever you wish, or even allow them to rapidly circle your ship delivering a handy (but by no means invincible) shield. Once you've unlocked your craft it will be possible to customise it with all manner of different armaments (though *Midnight Club 3* this ain't), many of which will be very familiar to fans of the series.



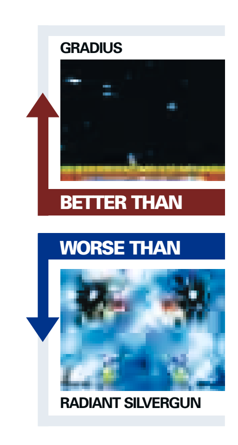
Gradius V may look gorgeous, but it's as hard as nails – you have been warned…

This developer laziness is something that can be applied to *Gradius V* as a whole. For all its tight gameplay and superb visuals, this is simply Treasure by numbers and if you've played any of its past games you'll find nothing here that you haven't seen already. It's a fact that's made painfully apparent whenever you encounter the many impressive bosses. For all their glorious design and intricate attack patterns, many of their moves have already been perfected in titles like *Radiant Silvergun*. Perhaps we're being too harsh, but if we're brutally honest, we were expecting a lot more than what's actually been delivered. If you're a hardcore gamer and crave near flawless gameplay mechanics and intricate level design above all else, then you've found shooting nirvana. Anyone else may well end up disappointed.



VERDICT 7/10

AN ACCOMPLISHED BLASTER, BUT FOR THE FANS ONLY

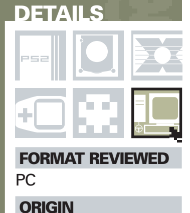




D-DAY

HISTORICALLY ACCURATE AND STILL FUN? THAT'LL BE THE D-DAY

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
France

PUBLISHER
Digital Jesters

DEVELOPER
Monte Cristo

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1 (1-8)

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium 1GHz, 512Mb RAM, DirectX 9.0 64Mb graphics card, 1Gb HDD space

We didn't pay much attention in history class back in our school days, though this rarely bothers us now. After all, the call for knowledge about the liberation of Europe in 1944 rarely arises in the games industry – or so we thought. Along with the sixtieth anniversary of the Normandy landings back in June, there were a number of ways to commemorate and recreate various aspects of the event, most of which came in the predictable form of real-time strategy PC games.

Following the success of *Desert Rats Vs Afrika Korps*, and using the same Walker 2 graphics engine, *D-Day* joins this list of titles and attempts to set itself apart from the extremely large crowd by being the most historically accurate of the lot while still managing to be playable and – most importantly, though without wishing to sound crass – fun. Bearing in mind exactly how tedious those history classes were, this is a pretty tall order. *D-Day* isn't the first game of this type to play the realism and accuracy cards – *Codename: Panzers*, for example, is notably detailed – but this is the only title to have been approved by Normandie Mémoire, an association of D-Day veterans and Normandy residents. Our knowledge of the subject may well be a little sketchy, but theirs definitely isn't. Every detail – from locations and dates right down to individual tanks' weak points and reload times – has been made as realistic as possible, with the obvious exception of some distances and time scales, which have been suitably cropped to prevent players from having to crawl across a mile-wide minefield for six hours.

Pleasing to the eye, accompanied by mildly cheesy triumphant music and complete with the standard multiplayer options, *D-Day* is a tidy little package. The first hours of the landing at Omaha Beach, the paratrooper attack on Sainte Mère l'Eglise and the battle of the Falaise pocket are all included as missions, and for those who are just after a decent real-time strategy war game then this is one of the better titles around at the moment. Okay, it's not going to win any innovation awards, but it's managed to achieve what it set out to do and is an enjoyable, highly accurate title. For those looking to recreate the progress of an Allied soldier at this harrowing, historic event, this is probably as close as you're going to get.

FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
BACK IN THE DAY: The involvement of Normandie Mémoire ensures every detail is right.
TELL IT LIKE IT IS: Actual testimonies from WWII veterans are included to enhance realism.

CODENAME: PANZERS



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN

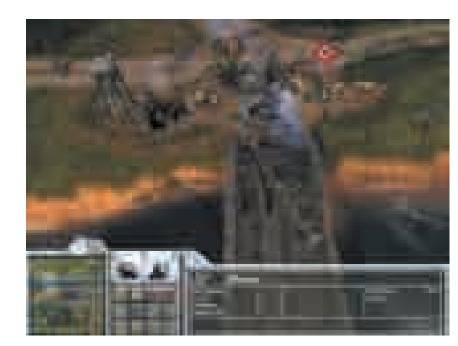
VERDICT 7/10
WAR IS VERY OCCASIONALLY A GOOD THING

Real locations, real buildings and real battles – this is as historically accurate as it gets.

Gaining control of the bridge was easy. Holding off the Germans until the timer runs out definitely won't be.









As if the concept of Frolf isn't strange enough, the characters you bump into are a little on the odd side.



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BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

GOLF: *Ribbit King* melds the popular walk-ruining, check-trouser-wearing pastime…

SILLINESS: … with tomfoolery that would make Tiger Woods turn in his grave. If he was dead.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

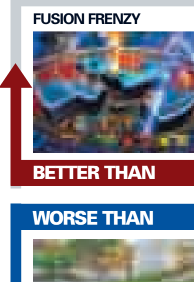
PUBLISHER
Atari

DEVELOPER
Bandai

PRICE
£19.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-4



FUSION FRENZY

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2

TOAD-IN-THE-HOLE ALL ROUND, THEN?

RIBBIT KING

One day, developers will realise that some games just don't need a plot. Take *Super Monkey Ball*, for example. You play a monkey. In a ball. You roll from A to B, collecting bananas if you can be bothered. And that's it. Admittedly, the sequel felt the need for a ridiculous narrative but that's beside the point. And then you come to *Ribbit King* and you may need to sit down to take in the enormity of this story. Planet Hippitron is running out of power and is in dire need of a new supply of Super-Ribbinite. As luck would have it, a Frolf tournament (we'll explain in due course) has a huge amount of this power source as the grand prize, so the king of Hippitron demands that Scooter enter the competition in order to bring home the bacon. Ridiculous. Awesome perhaps, but still ridiculous.

And so the Frolf begins. The basic mechanics are simple – using a traditional 'power bar' golfing interface, you fire a frog off a catapult and ultimately into a hole at the end of a course. The differences come once the amphibian is let fly: he'll go leaping along the ground a little after landing, swimming through water until he reaches a bank, jumping for power-ups and bonuses, or falling into various traps and hazards that affect his course. Rounds are decided through points rather than strokes so while it is vaguely possible to predict at least the first part of your turn, there are usually a few surprises around the short courses – the best-laid plans often falter while seemingly horrible efforts can lead to ten-minute combos.

By playing through the single-player tournament – which gets rather tough when the CPU opponents start racking up ridiculous amounts of points – you'll unlock a host of new characters, frogs (some of which have unique properties such as reduced weight or resistance to lava) and courses for quick games and multiplayer, and it's here that the game is at its best. It's a whole different ball (well, frog) game when a human player sneaks in a huge round or even a Frog-In-One rather than watching the AI do it time and time again in the main game – when the playing field is obviously even, there's much more fun to be had. If you ever wondered what golf would be like with more frogs involved, have a penchant for budget party games or are very fond of the phrase "What the hell's going on?" then 20 notes is a fair price indeed for such a quirky and unique title.

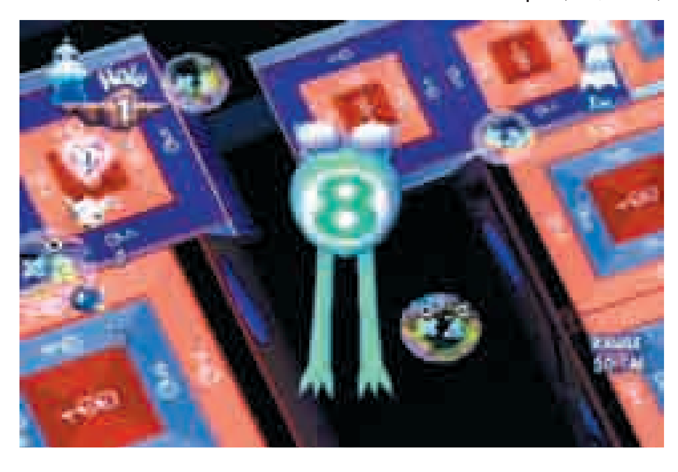
VERDICT 6/10
A SIMPLE AND ENTERTAINING NICHE TITLE

PS2 £19.99 OUT NOW



The odd bit of bizarre slowdown aside, there's little to choose between the two versions except for the fact that you'll need a Multi-tap to get the most out of multiplayer.

Once you've launched your frog off the catapult., his haphazard trajectory earns you points (or not, of course).



CONFLICT: VIETNAM

GO HOME, GI – SCI'S PILOTS WILL BOMB YOU

DETAILS





FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, PC

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
SCi

DEVELOPER
Pivotal Games

PRICE
£34.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

Staying here for long isn't a good idea – soldiers will keep coming until you move on.

Apparently, the slaughtering of Vietnamese communists is 'in' this season. In fact, with *Vietcong: Purple Haze*, *Shellshock: Nam '67* and *Conflict: Vietnam* all coming out virtually simultaneously, gamers are pretty spoilt for choice as far as gung-ho historical atrocities go. Unfortunately, this triple-whammy of games could cause some confusion among those eager to start killing Charlie by the dozen, such are the similarities between them. So the fact that *Conflict: Vietnam* is both the continuation of a successful series and the only current Nam title to offer a strategic side to proceedings should give it an edge over the competition… or so you'd think.

But reputation isn't everything. Indeed, the fact that *Conflict: Desert Storm I* and *II* were both so enjoyable only serves to make us wonder what on earth has gone wrong here. Yes, so the game retains many of the elements that made the series what it is, and yet *Conflict: Vietnam* just isn't half the game that its predecessors were. What's worse is that much of the problem (but, we have to stress, not all) comes through the change in location, even though you'd expect the dense jungles of Vietnam to be conducive to strategic warfare.



Your men are a rag-tag band of hardened soldiers who don't react if shot in the back…

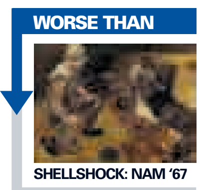
Perhaps the issue here is that while the cut-scenes and visuals certainly capture the grimy atmosphere of war-torn Vietnam (or at least the Hollywood perspective of it), the actual landscape isn't much like what you'd expect. Where we wanted dense but sprawling expanses of organic jungle there are only narrow paths of mud track fenced in by impenetrable walls of foliage interspersed with the occasional clearing with only one exit. Where we longed to sneak through the undergrowth, using plant-life for cover and fanning men out to flank the crafty Vietcong, you're left shuffling from set piece to set piece, following restrictive routes and generally failing to find

ACTUALLY BEING THERE



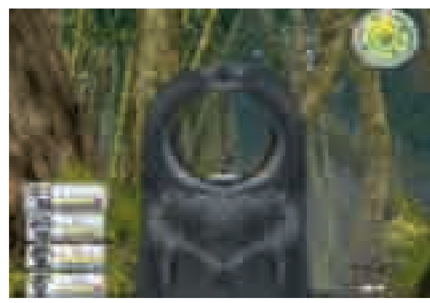
BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

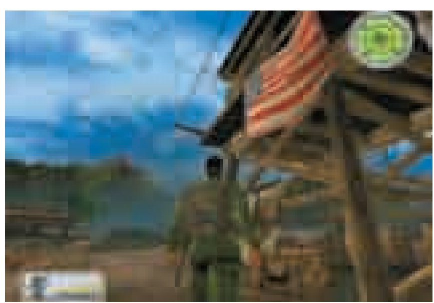


SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67





Switch to Realistic Aim mode and the sight takes up most of the screen.



Stand up straight, soldier – that's a goddamn US flag you're talking to.



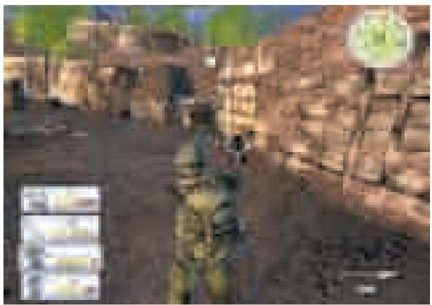


THAT'S THE STATS, JACK

***Conflict: Vietnam* sees the medals from the previous games replaced with a more conventional points system in terms of skill enhancement. The better a man does in a mission (killing enemies, completing objectives and so on), the more points he'll earn – at the end of each stage you can then spend these on improving a variety of skills. Unfortunately, this falls slightly flat in practice. The heavier action bias means that your soldiers can't hit the side of a barn to begin with because of their low stats, so keeping them alive is twice as hard… but they have to see more action in order to earn more points. Paradox? You betcha.**



Sure, he's tough, but if his stats are low, he won't have your back.



If you hear someone shout 'grenade', here's a tip – don't stand still.



Won't somebody think of the children? The VC did – and gave them guns.

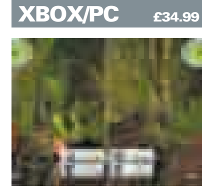
situations that really take advantage of having multiple soldiers under your command. Switching from an open threat such as the desert to the enclosed dangers of the Vietnamese jungle has caused *Conflict: Vietnam* to effectively cut out much of the need for having a squad in the first place; instead of having more freedom and creativity in taking down your enemies, your team become more like fish trapped in a jungle-shaped barrel.

That your men are dumber than a bag of khaki spanners when you're not directly controlling them doesn't help matters, so you'll constantly want to be telling them what to do (when you're not busy healing each of them repeatedly, that is). Sadly, when enemies are besieging you on all sides at a constant rate – and they will – you never have the time to stop and think before the bullets start flying, let alone use the complex process of selecting a single soldier, accessing the advanced targeting reticule and issuing detailed commands as properly as you should. Is this a realistic re-creation of how things really were in Vietnam, knowing that the enemy could strike at any time, but not knowing where from? Yes, probably. But as a game – as something you actively want to spend your spare time enjoying – it's just not any fun. In fact, compared to the last two games, it's a huge step backwards as far as playability goes. Considering that Pivotal has actually managed to improve the way the squad engine works over previous games, it seems a shame that such an opportunity has gone to waste.

Then there are numerous other issues that need pointing out, too. We doubt, for example, that it really takes an entire clip of ammunition to fell just one Vietcong soldier, or that hardened US GIs wouldn't be able to aim properly just because you haven't increased their stats. Even some things added to make your life easier don't work as well as they might; the realism of having actual gun sights in the place of a crosshair in Aiming mode makes it incredibly tough to score accurate shots, but the automatic lock-on in third-person mode has a life of its own and often targets enemies in the distance, even if there's one right next to you.

However, it's the fact that the series' uniquely enjoyable strategy aspects have been negated by poor design – combined with the pitfalls posed by being responsible for men that you can't actually use – that proves the biggest damper here. That the game manages to feel so different in the playability stakes, despite exhibiting almost all the same elements as its predecessors, is the most confusing aspect of the problem, but it doesn't change the fact that after several successes, SCi has proved that war isn't actually that fun after all.

XBOX/PC £34.99



Graphically superior to the PS2 version, but no better to play. At least the PC version's option to have multiple key mappings makes commanding your men slightly easier.

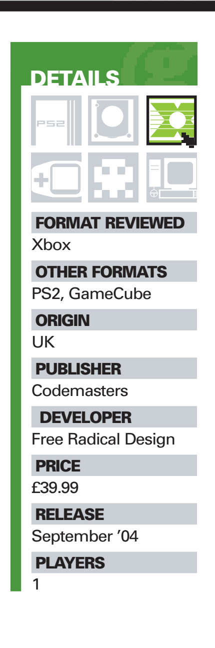
FAQs

Q. STRATEGIC?
Certainly. The option's there to use your men efficiently but, sadly, the jungle environment and innumerable enemies make it rather hard to do so.

Q. LINEAR?
Very much so. There's usually only one way to complete each mission and one path for you to follow – hardly a good use of the environment.

Q. GOOD FUN?
Not really, no – the incessant need for healing, combined with several really annoying flaws, will have you swearing like a trooper in no time.

VERDICT 4/10
WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, SADLY



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PS2, GameCube

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Codemasters

DEVELOPER
Free Radical Design

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
September '04

PLAYERS
1

SECOND SIGHT



CLOSE, BUT NO MENTAL CIGAR FOR FREE RADICAL

Oh, the irony – a game about psychic powers that could have been great if only the developer had known what the competition was up to. That *Second Sight* finds itself going mind-to-mind with Midway's *Psi-Ops* is unfortunate not just for the comparisons that will be drawn, but because the showdown highlights the flaws in this third-person mindbender rather than the qualities.

Thanks to Free Radical's distinctive graphical flair and ability to tell a story, the conspiracy-laden tale of John Vattic's fight for survival in the past and present does have more than a few high points, and *Second Sight*'s fair share of nice touches (such as weapons handling and level design) demonstrate terrific attention to detail. It's a shame, then, that these minor good points seem to be offset by the game's failings in several rather more important areas, as both the AI and the physics are incredibly inconsistent for a genre where you'd expect them to be finely tuned.

It's bad enough that the enemies are pretty dumb; they'll disregard Vattic's presence (even though they're less than ten feet away, often staring straight at him), ignore the bodies of fallen comrades and continue firing in one direction even if a fellow guard that you've possessed is slaughtering their team-mates right behind them. Even worse, the weight of numbers soon drags you down if you do get spotted, with guards spawning out of thin air at such a rate that the only solution is to start again. However, it's the physics engine, a crucial part of any game where flinging objects around with the power of your mind is part of the fun, that lets the side down in the worst way. The ability to throw limp enemies through walls – which may or may not bring guards running – or send piles of large wooden crates flying simply by walking into them is but a small example of a larger problem, one that leaves Vattic's world feeling as light as a feather rather than solid as a rock.

To be fair, *Second Sight* is at least intriguing and relatively enjoyable and will keep you wanting to see it through to its conclusion. Ultimately, though, there's no ignoring the fact that *Psi-Ops* – a game that, subtlety and stealth aside, features everything *Second Sight* offers, only better – has beaten this to the psychic punch, leaving it feeling rather inadequate.



■ Your responsibilities soon extend to protecting others as well as yourself – if any of them die, you'll have to attempt the mission again.

FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

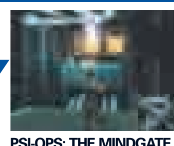
SOFTLY SOFTLY: *Second Sight* is about stealth not brute force, which creates slower-paced gameplay.

GUNG-HO: However, flashback sections do offer a more run-and-gun style of play.

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

PS2/GC £39.99

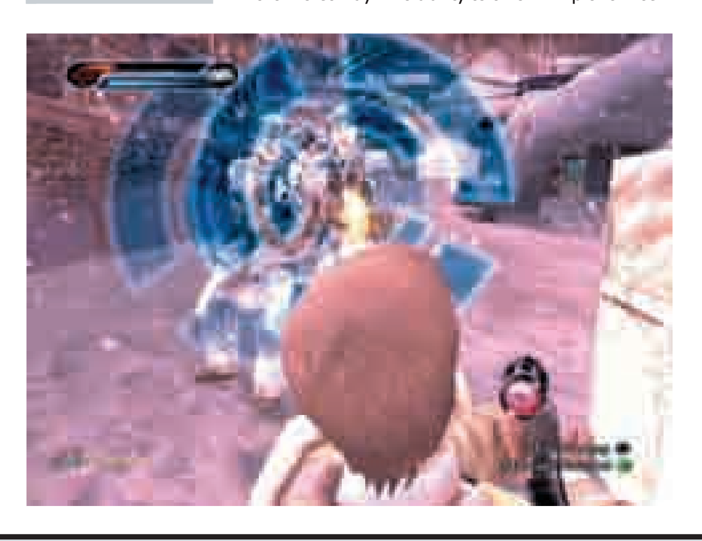


No real surprises here – all three versions look virtually identical, with only the PS2 version looking slightly rougher round the edges if you look really closely.



VERDICT 6/10

A FLIMSY BUT ENJOYABLE STEALTH ROMP





FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
BEAT IT: The bundled drum controller is a joy to use but the oversized sticks are the stars of the show.
USUAL SUSPECTS?: Squid, melon drums and bonnet-wearing dogs, all dancing to the tunes. Great.

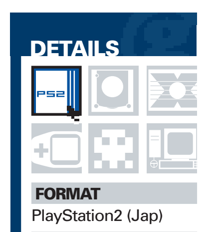




Just look at these chaps. They're drums apparently… flying drums with arms and legs.

TAIKO NO TATSUJIN: WAI WAI YONNDAIM

HIT ME WITH YOUR RHYTHM STICKS



DETAILS

FORMAT
PlayStation2 (Jap)

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Namco

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
¥6,380

RELEASE
TBA (Japan: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2



We remember when joypads were near essential for playing console games. Any suggestions of jumping around on an arrow-covered mat or shaking maracas were dismissed as the ramblings of a madman. Fortunately, times have changed. Gaming is evolving and 'playing' bongos or a guitar to control a game is now almost as normal as using a pad – it's only a matter of time before we see a flute or Jew's harp peripheral. And they can't come soon enough…

Until now, *Donkey Konga* has been the undisputed king of console drum games, but after getting down with our bad selves on *Wai Wai Yonndaim* we reckon it's time for the crown to be passed on. This title looks and plays almost identically to *Konga*, but the drum peripheral is responsible for the key difference in gameplay, as rather than your own puny hand slaps you're armed with sticks with which to pummel the drum. It may not seem a significant change, but the difference is immediately noticeable.

It's doubtful that anyone is hard-hearted enough to not instantly fall in love with the cylindrical, part-watermelon drum dog that acts as your host, and his equally bizarre pals all do a superb job of dancing around in a distracting manner as you attempt to pump out an amazingly complex drum solo. Whether these characters are more appealing than a barrel-throwing primate is a matter of opinion but where



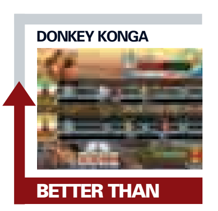
Namco's latest really excels over *Donkey Konga* (and many other rhythm action franchises) is in its unapologetic difficulty. There are plenty of modes that cater for beginner and intermediate levels, but there are also challenges for the best players.

Challenging, fun, stylish and well put together, *Taiko no Tatsujin: Wai Wai Yonndaim* is easily one of the better rhythm action titles on the market at the moment. If you have even a smattering of co-ordination, then a trip to your importer is looking very necessary.



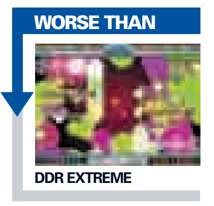
VERDICT 8/10
NOISE-MAKING AT ITS BEST

DONKEY KONGA



BETTER THAN

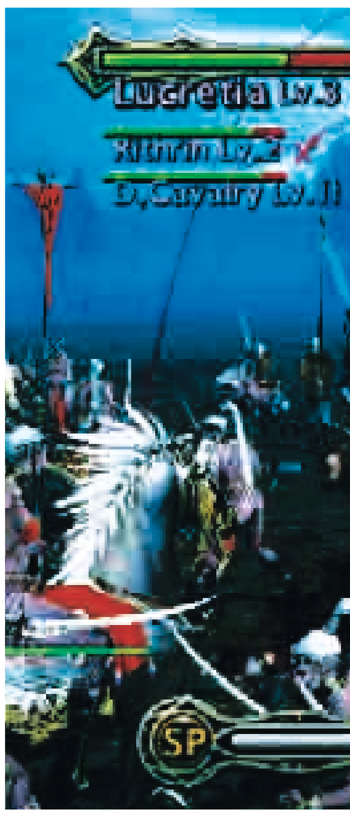
WORSE THAN



DDR EXTREME



You'll need to battle through several campaigns before getting your hands on the mighty Kendal…



KINGDOM UNDER

CONQUERING ALL THE GENRES IN ITS PATH

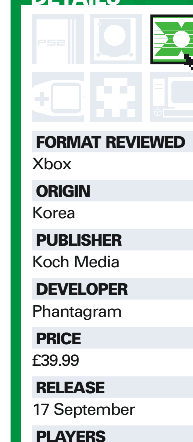


The level of customisation possible with your units is very impressive indeed.

You know a game is something special when it can cause a lasting effect on the player outside the gaming sphere. *Disgaea*, for example, has added the term 'Prinny dood!' to our vocabularies, *Burnout 3* has ruined our approach to road safety and we can't watch a great goal on *Match Of The Day* without discussing how to replicate it in *Pro Evo*. *Kingdom Under Fire* may not quite scale these dizzy heights of life-wrecking greatness but it seems content with the rung below, a level of involvement that will have strategic maps and battle plans bouncing around inside your head, keeping you awake as you try to formulate the perfect assault. The surprise here, though, is that such involvement comes not from a dedicated strategy title but from a game unashamed to flirt with as many other styles as it likes.

The battles in *Kingdom Under Fire* are an almighty clash of genres – moving units around takes the form of a competent RTS; conflict involving your lead unit can be played out in an action-oriented brawl à la *Dynasty Warriors* (albeit much bigger here); RPG elements tie the whole package together, allowing you to re-equip troops and level them up to earn new skills or even change them to a more useful job. Lowly soldiers will work their way up to being mighty knights, and with the excellent balancing of the strengths and weaknesses of units, your forces will come to need at least one unit from each of the major classes. Mechanics here are as

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
Korea

PUBLISHER
Koch Media

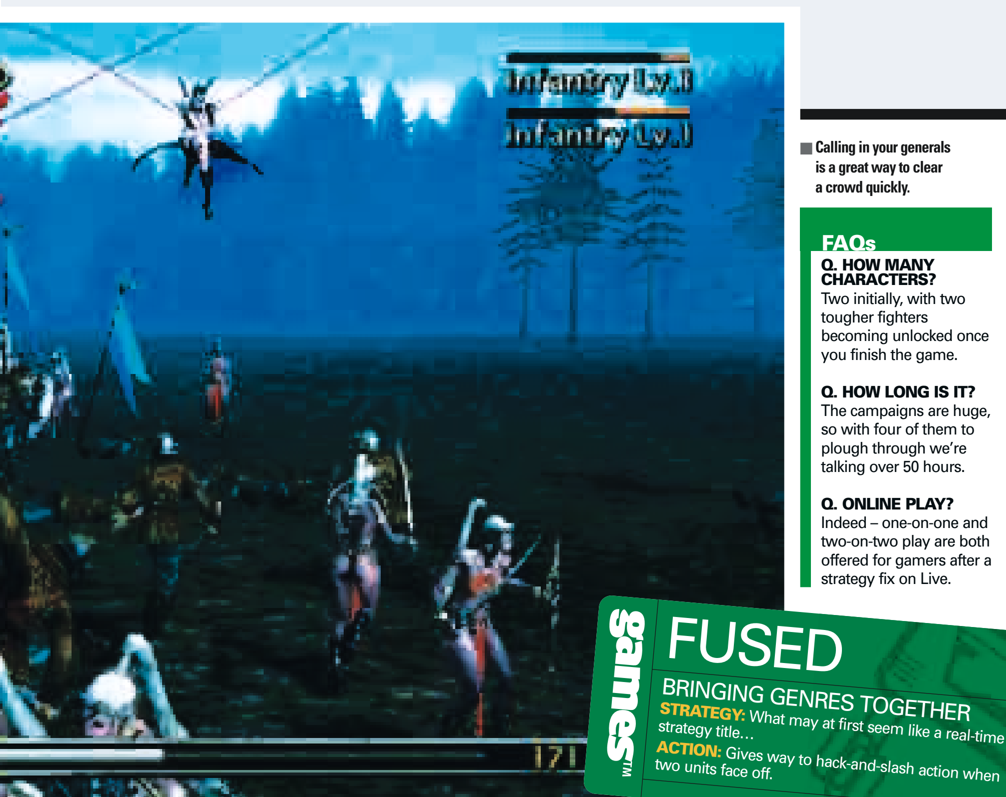
DEVELOPER
Phantagram

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
17 September

PLAYERS
1 (1-4 Online)





Calling in your generals is a great way to clear a crowd quickly.

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY CHARACTERS?
Two initially, with two tougher fighters becoming unlocked once you finish the game.

Q. HOW LONG IS IT?
The campaigns are huge, so with four of them to plough through we're talking over 50 hours.

Q. ONLINE PLAY?
Indeed – one-on-one and two-on-two play are both offered for gamers after a strategy fix on Live.

games™

FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

STRATEGY: What may at first seem like a real-time strategy title…

ACTION: Gives way to hack-and-slash action when two units face off.



The Mini-map is the easiest way to navigate terrain and move units.

KEVIN THE GREAT

We've seen some odd names in games before but *Kingdom Under Fire* takes unlikely monikers to a whole new level. When the game begins, you'll have a choice of two characters – Gerald and Lucretia. Not a bad start but a glance down the character roster reveals that Gerald's co-stars include a Rupert, a Morene (a medieval Maureen?), a Thomas, an Ellen and a Duane, none of whom look at all like their names might suggest. Still, it makes a change from the usual unpronounceable strings of consonants that pass for names in games of this ilk.

FIRE: THE CRUSADERS

solid as they are simple – pikemen, for instance, work wonders against mounted troops while a battalion crossing a river is the perfect target for a volley of arrows or a well-placed lightning spell.

In addition, you'll eventually gain access to the more unique units such as Storm Riders (large bird-like creatures) and the mighty Swamp Mammoth, a hulking mass of pure monster that stands some hundred feet tall and attacks by stomping any unit – including your own – in its path into a messy pile of ruined organs. Seeing these gigantic things shake the battlefield as they move makes for some truly incredible moments – it's clear that the word that best summarises Phantagram's return to the public eye is 'scale'.

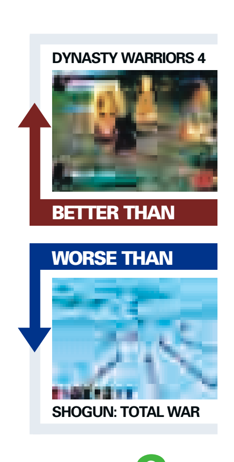
Where *Kingdom Under Fire* succeeds most is in its glorious and genuine sense of enormity. When so many games carry themes of conflict, it's high praise indeed to say that the battles in *Crusaders* are among the largest and most involved we've seen. Literally thousands of units populate the many battlefields, remaining where they fall long after death. And as campaigns progress, the early emphasis on action gives way to more and more cause to play strategically. Using fire attacks to rout enemies from forest areas, scouting regions for potential ambushes, setting and disarming traps, and using weather and even the sun to your advantage can all turn the tide of battle – more often than not, running into battle head-on is tantamount to suicide.

Luckily, not every scenario requires you to purge the entire land of enemies. Stealthy missions revolve more around reconnaissance than massacre, while some maps feature enemies that far outclass you and must be avoided, but whatever your ultimate goal may be, you can be sure that there will be a healthy amount of death. These less violent quests help the game's pace no end but the real thrill that your 40 pounds gets you isn't here – it's in the huge battles that occur when several units clash. Lifeless bodies fly everywhere, Ogres tower menacingly above the carnage and just when you think you've seen the last brigade of Orcs, three more platoons pour down a hill to ensure that you don't get away without a fight.

But the cruel irony is that although *Kingdom Under Fire* creates an engrossing epic fantasy feel better than the games based on the *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy (as well as being much better generally), without the bottomless coffers of EA or a high-profile licence behind it *Crusaders* will do well to sell even a fraction of the amount of units. Comparisons to Koei's *Dynasty Warriors* series simply don't do the game justice – there's just so much more to Phantagram's effort that you simply have to doff your proverbial cap in its general direction. A few localisation issues aside, *Kingdom Under Fire* is an absorbing and resplendent fusion of genres further improved by a selection of online modes that will ensure that the game remains fresh and enjoyable even after the world has been saved. Again.



Tightening formation makes a unit more defensive at the cost of speed.



VERDICT 8/10
A WONDERFULLY CRAFTED FANTASY EPIC



Don't even *think* about taking on one of these without an entire band of merry men (and women) to help you out.

PAL gaming sucks. For years, we've been forced to suffer horrible conversions and translations; been subjected to slower, clunkier copies of popular games; missed out on some of the finest games ever released and, perhaps worst of all, endured horrendous delays before even getting a sniff of some of our most anticipated titles – like *Final Fantasy XI*. Then by the time they do finally arrive, chances are you've had some of the game spoiled by the less scrupulous denizens of the internet. Is it any wonder that many gamers have turned to the seedy underworld of importing? With the price of foreign consoles and games lower than ever and compatibility at an all-time high (especially in the world of PC gaming), the situation isn't so bad today so long as you're willing to forego buying British.

And what better way to forego not only Britain but the entire real world than to create a digital avatar and live in a fictional dimension? Picking one

FINAL FANTASY XI

THE MISSING CHAPTER FINALLY MAKES IT TO EUROPE



For some people, their first Chocobo ride can't come soon enough.

adventure, still retaining your character's proficiency and applying a few customisation options to make them your own (albeit far less than the likes of *Star Wars Galaxies*), you're dropped into the world of Vana'diel and called upon to defend your chosen settlement from the forces of evil. Venture past the nearby plains where the puny enemies dwell and you'll find a hugely impressive planet to explore, either on foot or – once you acquire the necessary abilities – on a Chocobo mount.

But where the huge world of Vana'diel falls down is in its reliance on safety in numbers. Admittedly, the classes and jobs have been wonderfully balanced to make large parties fit together perfectly but this is no excuse for making solo play so difficult for anything but the toughest classes (many weaker characters can be slain by even the most inconspicuous enemies) and so distinctly unrewarding. On the other hand, few games can match the feeling of accomplishment that comes from a well-organised party taking down one of Vana'diel's largest fiends – even with nearly 20 allies at distressingly high levels, a mighty Behemoth took almost quarter of an hour to dispatch. Tales of players doing this single-handedly by exploiting certain traits chill us to the bone, with some sources claiming as many as four hours have been spent by individuals seeing off a single über-monster. Well, at least he can say he's done it…

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Square Enix

PRICE
£29.99 (Plus $12.95 monthly subscription)

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
Massively Multiplayer

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium III 800MHz, 128Mb RAM, 6Gb HDD space, ATI Radeon 9000 graphics card

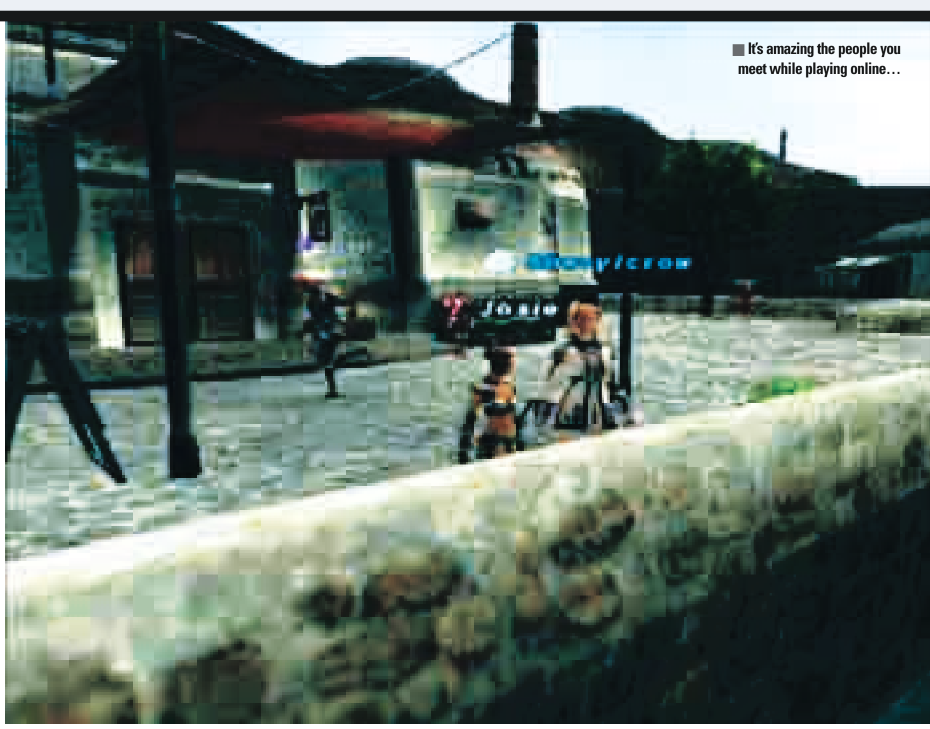


The game is run in such a way that events such as the Summerfest are accompanied by many smaller festivities.

TETRA'S SLACKERS

Knowing all too well that you can only wander the world killing tiny creatures for so long, Square Enix has bundled card game *Tetra Master* with *FFXI* as a little light relief for weary adventurers. The game is a tweaked version of that from *Final Fantasy IX*, the main difference being the fact that where cards were previously assigned a random value based on their basic strengths, each card now has its own statistics. These will grow as you use them in match play, so whether you're playing against the computer or another warrior elsewhere in the world, there's actually a reason to put down your Sword of Almighty Cutting and pick up a deck of cards. If you like card games at all, that is…





It's amazing the people you meet while playing online…

As is usually the case with MMORPGs, there's a worrying amount of time that must be put into *Final Fantasy XI* before your character reaches a high enough level to learn the 'make game fun' trait or, indeed, take down a couple of Bees single-handed. Combat initially seems as simplistic as the likes of *EverQuest* until your character starts to learn from the vast range of job- and weapon-based skills or (if you've picked a more magically inclined character) spells and summons and, sure enough, the age-old chore of level grinding is as prevalent here as in any rival title. What's fairly refreshing is Square Enix's approach to inter-player conflict, providing relief from the endless sea of Tiny Mandragora and Huge Hornets by way of a contact sport called Ballista. This sees cities facing off against one another in collecting rocks known as Petra and defeating rivals to earn the privilege to score points – not the most traditional instance of PvP gameplay and, as such, one that is likely to be met with mixed reactions.

Final Fantasy XI may be three years late (a blow that Square Enix intends to lighten by bundling both expansion packs with the European version of the game), but time hasn't treated it too badly at all. It still shines aesthetically – not up to the series' own standards, perhaps, but it's easily among the top flight of massively multiplayer games. If it weren't for a few titles like *City Of Heroes* taking the genre in interesting new directions, we'd find it far easier to recommend this more traditional life-consuming abyss of a game. In fact, 'traditional' is one of the best words you can throw at *Final Fantasy XI* – not an insult per se so much a realisation that this is a genre in transition. All in all, this marks a triumphant entry into a tricky genre for Square Enix. Better yet, the huge subscriptions in both America and Japan meant that the game was already generating profit before the European version was even confirmed. Perhaps they do love us after all…



games™ GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

IT TAKES ALL SORTS: When taking on the tougher areas you'll need large parties comprising skilled professionals across all races if you want to have even a chance of survival, let alone success.



Taking things on single-handedly isn't for the faint-hearted.

VERDICT 7/10

A WORTHY – ALBEIT LATE – ADDITION TO THE SERIES

LINEAGE II



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



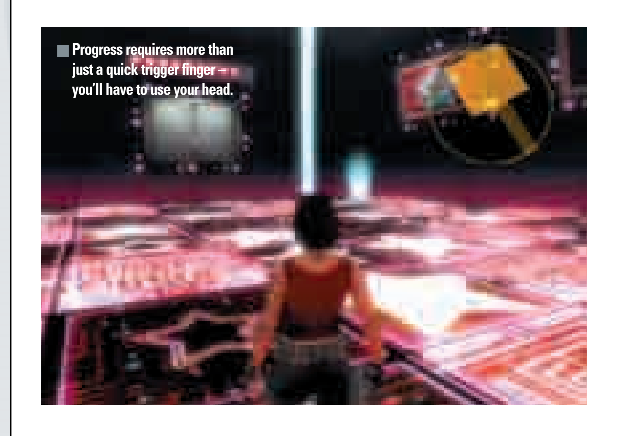
CITY OF HEROES

FAQs

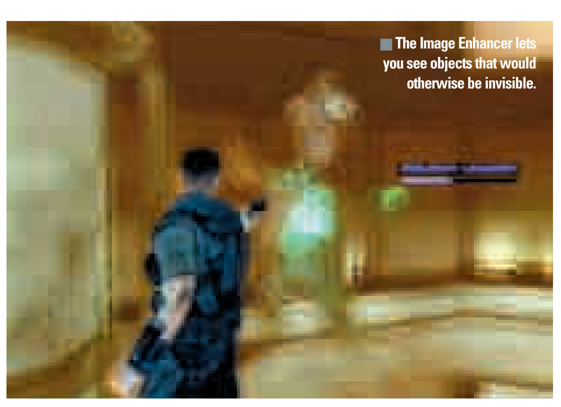
Q. FRIENDLY PLAYERS?
The *Final Fantasy* brand brings in all sorts, from the mouthy 13-year-old American to the more sedate middle-aged veteran.

Q. COMMUNICATION ISSUES?
A built-in translation tool means that certain stock phrases are instantly converted by the game.

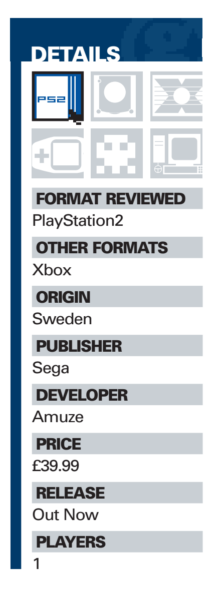
Q. HOW LONG?
Don't be silly. *Final Fantasy XI* is one of those games that you could theoretically play for the rest of your life. There is a boss of sorts, though…



Progress requires more than just a quick trigger finger – you'll have to use your head.



The Image Enhancer lets you see objects that would otherwise be invisible.



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox

ORIGIN
Sweden

PUBLISHER
Sega

DEVELOPER
Amuze

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION

SEGA'S HUNTER BECOMES THE HUNTED

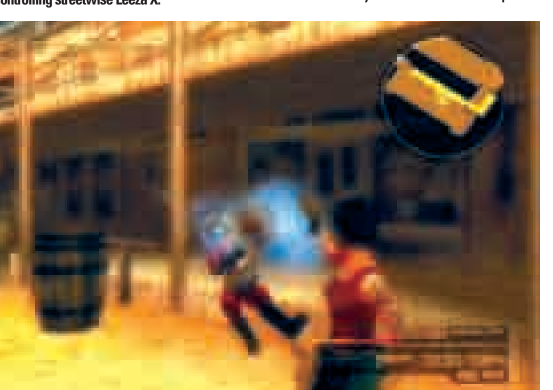
As a casualty of the Dreamcast's demise, not to mention the hype surrounding the release of *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty*, *Headhunter* was a distinctly under-appreciated title. It was a real shame that it didn't perform nearly as well as it deserved because, at the time, it stood out as a polished and enjoyable adventure that told a convincing tale as well as any other game of its kind.

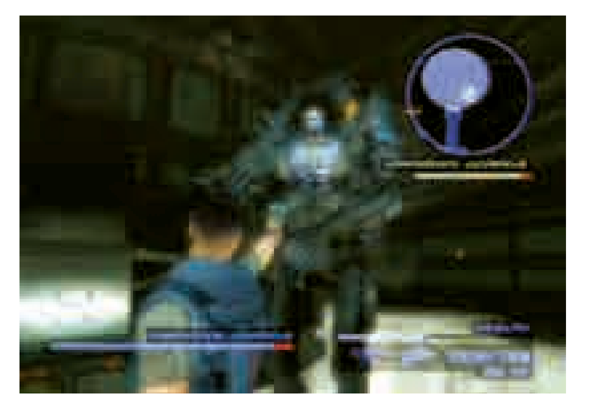
Of course, the 3D action/stealth genre has come on leaps and bounds in the last three years and, as such, *Headhunter: Redemption* emerges to find that people's expectations for the genre have been raised considerably. While it's no big surprise, then, that *Redemption* doesn't really have what it takes to lay claim to the accolade of 'Best In Show', it's still pleasing to find that the game is a decent example of the genre for all the right reasons. Perhaps the most tangible of these is the intricate story that writer Philip Laurence has so lovingly crafted, a story that gently lures you in before sinking its teeth in and refusing to let go. A key part of this is the game's atmosphere which, as in the original *Headhunter*, is reminiscent of the *Robocop* movies – giant corporations run everything, with the cultural divide illustrated through the locations of Above (home of the wealthy minority) and Below (home to everyone else), and a thick vein of black humour runs through the product ads shown in the game.

It's a combination of this atmosphere, quality scriptwriting and above-par voice acting that really helps *Redemption* bring to life what could otherwise have been a relatively bland concept. Admittedly, the plot sounds somewhat obvious: what starts out as a routine investigation for veteran Headhunter Jack Wade – and, more specifically, his reluctant new partner Leeza X, who you spend much of the game controlling – soon turns into something far more sinister. However, the twists and turns that the story takes, not to

Powerful weapons, such as the machine gun, need to be fired in short bursts if you want to maintain your aim.

Jack's the *Headhunter* hero, but you spend most of the game controlling streetwise Leeza X.



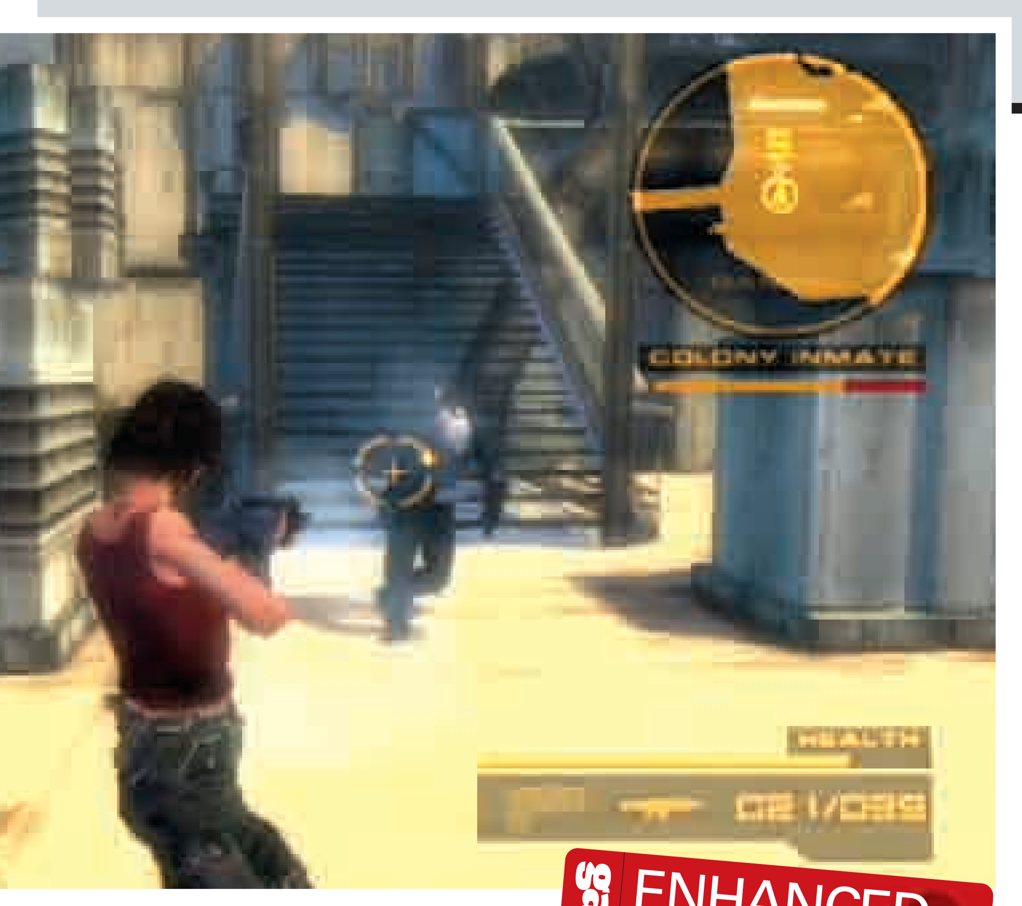


FAQs

Q. WHERE'S THE SPLIT?
Although you play as two characters, most of the time you control Leeza X. It's only in the final third of the game that Jack really starts to see some action.

Q. PUZZLES?
Nothing too taxing, but more complex and satisfying than the usual third-person action game 'take key X to door Y antics.

Q. REPLAY VALUE?
Not much. With many of the puzzles only having one solution, there's no real reason to go back once you've reached the end.



mention the varied locales it visits, are more than enough to keep you gripped until the very end, even if you have the foresight to see one or two surprises coming.

Thankfully, the story isn't the only thing that *Redemption* has going for it, although the game does play more like an upgraded version of the original rather than taking pointers from today's leading examples of the genre. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, particularly as the first *Headhunter* gave *MGS2* a run for its money in some respects, however, it does mean that people coming to *Redemption* with expectations based upon other stelath/action games may be let down. Certainly, Leeza's movements can feel more than a little stilted, with her tendency to stick to walls if you wander too close in the stealth position proving particularly frustrating when attempting to sneak up on enemies.

As you quickly come to terms with her limitations, though (none of which hamper what you actually need to do), the various plus points soon come to the fore. Both Leeza and Jack are suitably athletic and can run, dodge and sneak as well as (if not better than) Solid Snake ever could in the first two *MGS* games, with Leeza's cartwheeling capabilities looking like something out of *The Matrix*. The fact that aiming your gun is a precise art, with patience required to score those perfect shots rather than just being able to blast away, also increases the tension, although the inability to perform headshots proves a little disappointing at times.

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

STRIP CLUB: Many of the original game's weak points (like the motorbike sections) are now gone.

MIX AND MATCH: The game's mix of gunplay and brain-teasing problems keeps things interesting.

Indeed, it's this relatively minor (and admittedly unimportant) detail that sums up all the problems that *Redemption* faces – story aside, everything that's in the game is very competent and enjoyable but it doesn't quite go out of its way enough to push the envelope as far as the overall experience goes, when compared to where the genre is today. That's not to say that *Redemption*'s gameplay suffers as a result. Having played the game through to its tense finale, there's no doubt that Sega and Amuze have come up with a solid adventure that does both companies proud and stands firm to Amuze's philosophy of taking its time over quality titles rather than rushing out half-finished cookie-cutter games. Whether that can win over enough people to prevent *Redemption* suffering the same fate as its predecessor is another matter. For Amuze's sake, we hope it can.



VERDICT 7/10

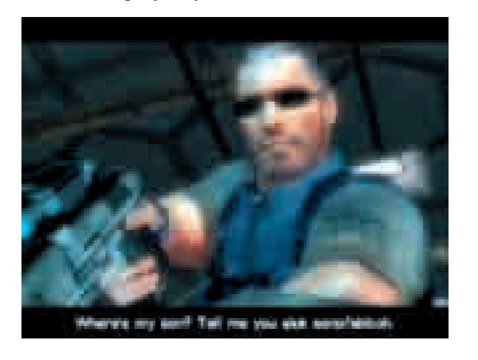
AN ENJOYABLE FOLLOW-UP TO AN UNDERRATED GAME



As the story progresses you'll face opposition from these spider-like machines – in large numbers they can prove incredibly tricky.

BIGGER IS BETTER

As is often the case with action-based third-person games, *Redemption* features a number of boss battles for you to deal with throughout your adventure. In the early stages, these come down to nothing more than having to deal with a regular enemy who happens to have a bigger gun than you. However, the further you get into the game, the nastier the foes become. From a feisty woman armed with a riot shield to an over-exuberant game show host with a taste for lasers, there's plenty of variety… Although towards the end, things tend to get pretty twisted.



XBOX £39.99



Obvious graphical polish aside (and even then, there's not much in it), it's safe to say the Xbox and PS2 versions of *Redemption* are near identical. Which is a good thing, really.



WINNING ELEVEN 8

JEEZ – THE NEW SEASON IS KICKING OFF ALREADY?

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Konami

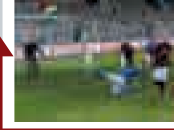
DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
¥6,980

RELEASE
N/A (Japan: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2 (1-8 via Multi-tap)

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER





The new free kick options build on the already great system, allowing tricks, dummies and direct shots.

Ninety-nine per cent of the time the number of units sold is not directly related to quality – you only have to look at the music or game charts to see that hype and marketing are pretty powerful tools. But we're not going to bitch about how none of this success is deserved. That's an argument for another time and we've just got our hands on that rarest of articles – the missing one per cent. *Winning Eleven* is a series that has built itself up from humble beginnings to become the defining digital re-creation of the UK's most popular sport. In its homeland, *WE8* sold over a million copies in a single day, and while the brand does now have a sense of familiarity to most gamers, many of that number will have been avid fans. As with the sport itself, the fans are desperate to follow their team (well, game) from day one of the new season. To learn the game once more. To love the game anew. To become one with the game all over again...

As the home team jogs out onto the pitch, the fans go wild for all the elements they know and love. Fluid control has been tightened further still and the difference in pace between quick and sluggish players has been made more apparent – a welcome change over last season's squad. You'll also notice the weight and speed of players makes quite a difference in both attacking and defending – chunky players can simply charge through enemy lines while the more nimble striker can dance around defenders with more elegance and grace than the series has ever offered.

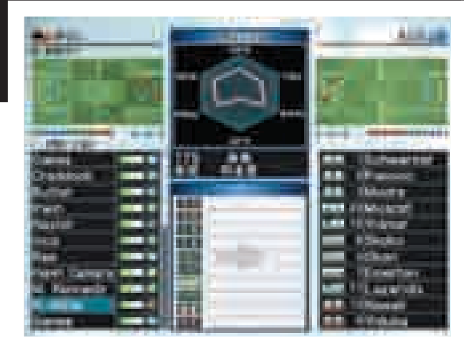
Also of note is this year's new kit – a stylish and simple front end is supported by improved aesthetics across the board. Presentation is given a further boost by the improved animations, both during play and in short cut-scenes (like the referee breaking up a fight or the ball being placed before an important set piece to build tension). To say that

Players are now stretchered off while injuries are treated, returning or limping back down the tunnel soon after.



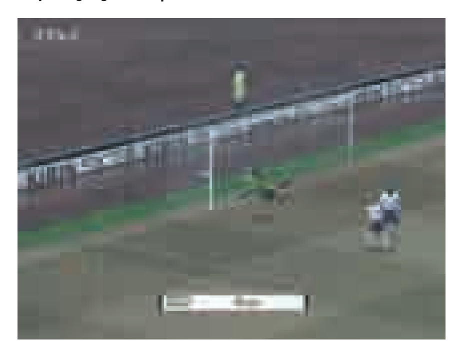
Want the ultimate insult? Run the keeper the length of the pitch and wallop the ball home.







Better stock up on memory cards now for all those awesome replays you're going to rack up.





As if you needed them, there are even more ways to beat the keeper in *WE8*.

ACCESS DENIED

Every time fresh information reaches us about a new *Winning Eleven* title, there's always at least one pidgin English translation that implies online play. What's worse, these tantalising titbits are continually served up and time after time we blindly believe them, booking a few months off work only to discover when the game does arrive that there's no such mode anywhere in sight. Cue several hours of yelling and much trawling of the heavily Japanese menus 'just in case', when deep down we know that we're still waiting for the online debut of the series. Probably just as well, really – we do need to leave the house occasionally, after all.

games™

ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

REAL WORLD: Konami has officially licensed the entire top flights from Holland, Spain and Italy, further adding to the already impressive spread of club teams on offer.



Some of the new pitches are far from easy on the eye…

the franchise is slowly approaching the lofty production values of EA's series is no word of a lie.

The away team, on the other hand, meets a more frosty reception, primarily because it's comprised mostly of the minor annoyances that have dogged the series since the PSone days. Most of these fall under the 'forced control' umbrella, and while there are moves and skills that can help keep a wayward ball in play the game still has a tendency to make even human-controlled players knock the ball into touch instead. Then there are the licensing issues that prevent most teams from donning realistic strips – an understandable omission perhaps, but still the only real area where the series falls down to EA's well-polished annual updates. On top of that, the limited licence means that teams like Wales and many of the African sides still get fictional names and sometimes likenesses – even the Dutch and the German sides aren't safe from the name-bending tomfoolery.

Finally, and a little later than planned, the referee makes his way onto the hallowed Konami turf for the first time. Sure enough, he's been sitting in the dressing room swotting up on the rules of the game all this time in order to make *Winning Eleven 8* the best approximation of the sport yet. Strictness varies greatly between referees but, on the whole, decisions are at their least questionable in years. Best of all, the handball rule (one that failed to translate entirely from the real sport to a videogame) seems to have been done away with or at least hugely reduced – in all our many hours, we've yet to see a single violation.

As usual, *Winning Eleven 8* serves as a superb barometer for anxious gamers as to just how good *Pro Evolution 4* is likely to be – we have it on good authority that the PAL version will see features beyond this Japanese release and we can't wait to see what they are. Major renovation of the Master League (players now age and retire as well as improve or wane depending on your play and coaching) and the daunting prospect of the new six-star difficulty will ensure that the single player is well catered for, but there can be no hiding the game's multiplayer bias. If you'll excuse the term, this gives two or more rivals a level playing field and an excuse to hurl insults at your best buddies over the most petty of events. As expected, *Winning Eleven 8* offers more evolution than augmentation but it still improves on past instalments – perhaps not as much as we'd like but it's just enough to put it top of the table on goal difference.

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY TEAMS?
A whopping 136 club teams (including the entire Premiership) and over 50 internationals, including newcomers Latvia.

Q. BETTER AI?
Certainly – it's most noticeable in the new six-star difficulty. Good luck – you'll need it.

Q. A WORTHY UPDATE?
As usual, absolutely. But there's still that last bit of tweaking to do…



VERDICT 9/10

FIFA'S FACING A RELEGATION STRUGGLE THIS YEAR



Although the option's there, three players at once can prove pretty chaotic.



You can unlock and learn new moves by putting in some hours in Practice mode.

THE NBA SERIES HITS THE STREETS. BLING IT ON

NBA BALLERS

games™ ENHANCED
IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL
WHAT A CLOWN: Make your opponent look like an idiot with the all new Act A Fool moves.
LOOKS FAMILIAR: Use Character Creation to build your double. You'll want to make yourself taller, mind.

DETAILS

FORMAT
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Midway

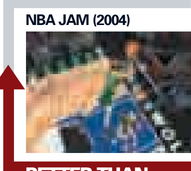
DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
10 September

PLAYERS
1-3

NBA JAM (2004)



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



NBA STREET 2

Let's shoot some hoops. It's safe to say that at **games™** we've used this phrase very rarely, though you get the impression that on the other side of the Atlantic they mumble it to each other before, during and after every meal. Okay, they probably don't, but this is as good a way as any to illustrate the obvious fact that basketball has reached a level of popularity in the States that it can only dream of in the UK. Despite this fact, the *NBA* series has been hugely successful over here and we fondly remember the days of *NBA Jam* on the SNES and all the joy and competitiveness it brought into our lives.

Leaving the official courts far behind, *Ballers* takes the game to 'da streets' (as well as various NBA players' homes and yachts) and will see you taking part in a TV Tournament mode or a Rags To Riches story mode. TV Tournament is exactly what you'd expect and is your basic laddered competition but Rags To Riches is this title's main attraction. This mode takes the form of reality TV show where you have to lead your personalised b-baller through a chain of matches and elevate him from a hoop-shooting street dawg to a respected floor player.

New moves and unlockables are your rewards for playing through these modes, but even these incentives might not be enough to keep a player's interest up. Each confrontation is generally exactly the same and victory is sometimes dependent on whether the irritating catch-up AI decides to beat you or not. This, coupled with the fact that being on the defensive is obscenely more difficult than being offensive, might remove the appeal very quickly in the case of non-basketball fans.



There's nothing quite as fun as having professional b-ballers annihilate a little replica of yourself.

If you glance towards the sidelines in any match, you'll spot the ever-scary MC Supernatural who's 'responsible' for the selection of tunes that you'll be hearing. These include exclusive tracks by Jurassic 5 and Phife Dawg (a member of A Tribe Called Quest, apparently), all of which add suitably to the street ambience. Good looking and easy to play, *Ballers* is true to the series and will remain great fun for as long as your interest in basketball allows – though for some this may not be very long.

VERDICT 7/10
TYPICAL NBA ACTION WITH ATTITUDE

DETAILS

FORMAT
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
Relentless

PRICE
£39.99

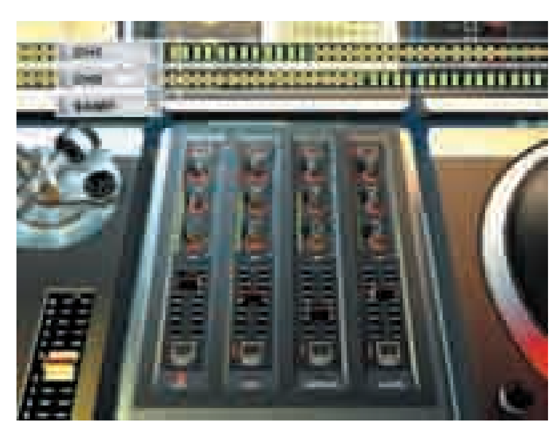
RELEASE
September '04

PLAYERS
1

DJ: DECKS & FX

RELENTLESS MIXES IT UP FOR THE MASSES





All the features that you need to create your masterpiece are present and correct. Now you just need the skills.

We've all witnessed the razzle-dazzle life of the club DJ. Up on their podium, seamlessly mixing the latest happening dance tracks. The booze, the music, the women… *DJ: Decks & FX* offers you the chance to grab a slice of this lifestyle for yourself, although you'll probably be at home in your lounge rather than a club – and with nowhere near as many admirers.

Taking the form of a pair of floating decks, the *Decks & FX* interface provides you with all the gear that you need to create your own set. As well as the essential twin turntables you'll have access to an effects unit, sampler, mixer and a heaving stack of virtual vinyl. In the real world this kind of kit would probably set you back the best part of three grand, so having it all neatly pressed onto one CD should be very appealing to those would-be bedroom DJs who aren't too fond of the thought of a re-mortgage.

Thanks to the PS2's lack of a storage device, the initially impressive 50-plus tracks are unfortunately all you've got to play with. This is disappointing, as the ability to add your own tunes into the mix would have made the title a far more useful tool and would help to keep things interesting when you've had your fill of the tracks supplied. Another annoyance is the fact that you can only save one mix at a time, so it's a case of carefully crafting a groovy set, listening to it a few times then losing it and starting over – think of this as a funky musical etch-a-sketch.

This isn't a game, nor is it a music creation device. It's essentially a collection of expensive equipment and it does a very good job of being this. There are no high scores to snag and no unlockables, but if you want to play DJ and fiddle with a selection of 'phat choons' then *Decks & FX* could well be what you're after to fully realise your disc-spinning dreams. Though if you're not of the DJing ilk, it's questionable how long the ability to mix a selection of tracks that you've probably never heard of is going to hold your interest.



games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

BEAT BOX: A huge number of samples and effects lets you create some truly superb mixes.

PARTY TIME: The set you create can be saved and played back. Perfect for breaking the ice at parties…



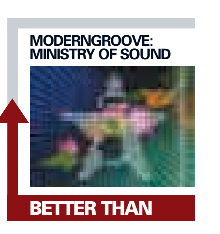
It may take a little time but you'll soon be dazzling your friends with your mixing skills.

VERDICT 5/10

GREAT FOR DJ WANNABES, BUT NOT FOR ANYONE ELSE

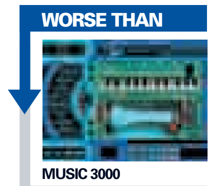


MODERNGROOVE: MINISTRY OF SOUND



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



MUSIC 3000


1P 000100
2:10
1P



The original man on a mission **Renegade Amstrad [Imagine] 1987**


eMag


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NO.23 OCT 2004
00p
RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION
THE MONTHLY
OLD-SCHOOL
SOFTWARE
REVIEW
Classic Machine
Atari Jaguar
WE LOOK BACK AT
ATARI'S LAST CONSOLE
MEGA MAN
ANNIVERSARY
COLLECTION
Capcom's new
retro collection sets
high standards
RAINBOW ISLANDS
WE TAKE A TRIP OVER THE RAINBOW
The greatest scrolling fighters ever
Umihara Kawase
NOT THE PLATFORMER
YOU'RE EXPECTING
PLUS
RETRO NEWS,
SIX OF THE BEST,
CLASH OF THE TITANS,
FAMILY TREE,
RETRO CONTACT,
ULTIMATE COLLECTION
AND MUCH MORE...

RETRO NEWS

Find out what's going on in the here and now of retro gaming…

A few months back, I said it was unlikely that we'd be covering any future GameCube titles. Well, I lied… Believe me, this wasn't intentional, but with so many compilations starting to appear on current formats, it would be a crying shame not to cover them in the mag. So from now on, any retro collections like this month's *Mega Man Anniversary Collection* or next month's *Midway Arcade Treasures 2* will be appearing in the Retro section and not in the reviews pages. Whether these compilations will continue, however, depends on the public's willingness to buy them and publishers giving the gamers what they want.

Take the recently announced *Sonic Mega Collection Plus*, for example – *Sonic CD* is by far one of the most popular games in the series, but Sega still refuses to release it. Apparently, it's too hard to emulate on newer systems, but anyone with access to a chipped Xbox will know this to be blatantly untrue. Another rumour (to be taken with a large pinch of salt) is that Yuji Naka himself has no love for the title (it wasn't created by Sonic Team) and is in no hurry to embrace it as part of the Sonic series.

Even without the inclusion of titles like *Sonic CD*, *Sonic The Fighters* and *SegaSonic*, this still looks like being a great compilation and good value for money. But just think how much better it could have been…

Darran Jones, Retro Editor

Classic Gaming Expo Rides Again

After a great debut, CGEUK is getting ready for a second outing

After the success of July's Classic Gaming Expo, organiser Chris Millard will return next year with an even grander event for fans of all things retro. We caught up with Chris to see what he thought about this year's event and what he's planned for 2005.

games™: What were the highlights of this year's show?

CM: From the public's point of view, I think the main highlight was Matthew Smith – legendary creator of *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*. Matthew has been out of the public eye for around a decade or so, and there are even websites that speculate as to his whereabouts – we've now been able to answer that question. For me, the highlight was seeing the success of the event. Never having done anything like this before, I was very nervous in the run-up, wondering if anyone would actually turn up! However, seeing people queuing outside the venue soon put those fears to rest.

games™: Will next year's event be at a new venue?

CM: No, we're going to keep this venue [Fairfields Hall, Croydon] for next year. Now that we know the venue, what its pros and cons are, we are going to concentrate our efforts on making the event bigger, which we can do in this venue since we'll just hire more space. Given time, we'd like to move to somewhere more central within the UK, but we need to make sure we get the formula of the event correct first.

games™: Can we expect to see the return of Matthew Smith?

CM: Indeed you can. Matthew actually said to us that he'd like to be involved on a regular basis, and there is talk of him actually designing and overseeing some competitions at the event. However, we can't say more until nearer the time.

games™: Any other celebrities lined up for next year?

CM: Absolutely. We've already got Archer Maclean, Jeff Maclean, Stuart Fotheringham and Andy Nuttall confirmed, and there are some others we are liaising with at the moment.

games™: How difficult was it to organise CGE UK?

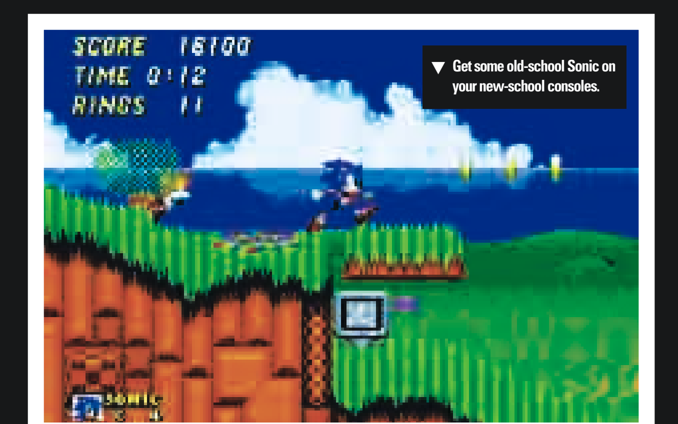
CM: Immensely. The event was organised solely by my wife and I. Neither of us have any background in event management, so we came into this straight in at the deep end. It was a struggle, and we came across a few pitfalls. However, our steep learning curve has put us in a really good position for next year. It's been an 'experience' but we've loved it.

CGEUK will return, 30-31 July 2005

SONIC BOOM

SEGA'S BLUE HEDGEHOG APPEARS IN ANOTHER NEW COMPILATION, BUT WHERE'S SONIC CD?

It's already appeared on the GameCube, but Sega's *Sonic Mega Collection* is finally heading to the PS2 and Xbox. And to make up for the delay, *Sonic Mega Collection Plus* will feature even more games than the Cube original and retail for a ridiculously low price of $20 (around £11). The package will include a total of 20 games and will feature the likes of *Sonic The Hedgehog 1*, *2* and *3*, *Sonic Chaos*, *Sonic Labyrinth* and *Sonic Drift*. Annoyingly, there's still no sign of *Sonic CD* (it's apparently much harder to emulate than the other games) and it would have been nice to see some of the more obscure titles (*SegaSonic*, anyone?), but this is still a great deal for Sonic fans.



▼ Get some old-school Sonic on your new-school consoles.

GAMING NEWS

SAMUS GETS SENTIMENTAL

Special bonus disc for Metroid fans

With *Metroid Prime 2* just around the corner, Nintendo has just released a bonus disc in the US that pays homage to everyone's favourite female bounty hunter. As well as movie trailers and a playable demo of *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*, the disc includes an extensive art gallery and 'The Metroid Chronicle', an interactive look at the *Metroid* series.

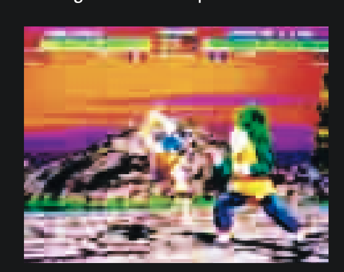


Although originally available as part of a promotion, it's now possible to pick up the disc with a repackaged version of the original *Metroid Prime* for around £13 from the likes of www.videogameplus.ca. Although it's a shame it doesn't include the original games, this disc will please fans.

SEGA PREPARES TO PACK A PUNCH

Will AM2's classic fighter turn Sega's retro series around?

If there's one thing you can say about Sega's remakes for the PlayStation2, it's that they've certainly been prolific. Sadly, the quality has varied greatly, with many of the titles failing to come close to the original arcade experiences that gamers remember. Hopefully, though, that's all about to change as AM2 itself is working on the remake of *Virtua Fighter 2* to ensure that it's as faithful as possible to the excellent arcade game.



Little is known about what extras (if any) it will include, but it has been revealed that the arcade versions of both *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Virtua Fighter 2.1* will be included on the disc. The Sega Ages 2600 range has been fairly hit-and-miss (expect a round-up of titles in a later issue) but with any luck, *Virtua Fighter 2* will be the title to get the franchise back on track.



UK Music Charts

1 NEVER GONNA GIVE YOU UP	RICK ASTLEY
2 WIPEOUT	FAT BOYS & THE BEACH BOYS
3 HEART AND SOUL	T'PAU
4 WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?	PET SHOP BOYS & DUSTY SPRINGFIELD
5 SOME PEOPLE	CLIFF RICHARD
6 TOY BOY	SINITTA
7 PUMP UP THE VOLUME	M/A/R/R/S
8 WHERE THE STREETS HAVE NO NAME	U2
9 WONDERFUL LIFE	BLACK
10 SWEET LITTLE MYSTERY	WET WET WET

Games you were playing in 1987

1 OPERATION WOLF	ARCADE
2 THUNDER BLADE	ARCADE
3 BIONIC COMMANDO	ARCADE
4 GAUNTLET	SPECTRUM
5 CALIFORNIA GAMES	SPECTRUM
6 BALLBLAZER	AMSTRAD
7 MILK RACE	AMSTRAD
8 ALIENS	C64
9 NEBULAS	C64
10 R-TYPE	ARCADE

Last Month's PC Engine GT Screenshots

1ST ROW 1943 Kai , Chan And Chan, Chase HQ, Gunhed, Hit The Ice, Ninja Spirit, Operation Wolf, Skweek, Soldier Blade, P-47 The Freedom Fighter

2ND ROW Gradius, Cadash, Circus Lido, Adventure Island, Image Fight , Ninja Gaiden, OutRun , Side Arms, Son Son II , Wonderboy In Monster Land

3RD ROW Doko Doko Don, Burning Angels, Dragon Spirit, Genpei Tournaden, Kyukyoku Tiger, The New Zealand Story, Parodius, Shinobi, Space Harrier, Winning Shot

4TH ROW Afterburner II, Bonk's Revenge, Coryoon, Galaga 88, Jackie Chan Adventures, New Adventure Island, Pac-Land , Shanghai, Space Invaders, Vigilante

5TH ROW Alien Crush, Bonk's Adventure, Devil's Crash, Aeroblasters, Double Dungeons, Mr Heli no Dai Bouken, Power Drift, Salamander, Splatter House, Turrican

6TH ROW Armed Formation F, Bomberman 94, Die Hard, Fantasy Zone, Knight Rider Special, Rabio Lepus Special, Photoboy, Magical Chase, Super Star Soldier, Twin Bee

7TH ROW Batman, Bloody Wolf, Final Soldier, Cloud Master, Impossamole, Moto Roader, R-Type Part 1, R-Type Part 2, Street Fighter II Championship Edition, Tiger Road

8TH ROW Keith Courage In The Alpha Zones, Atomic Robo-Kid, Dragon Sabre, Barunba, The Legend Of Hero Tonma, Legendary Axe, Parasol Stars, Tricky, Tatsujin, Thunder Blade

Retro DIARY

AS OLD-SCHOOL GAMING GETS MORE POPULAR, IT'S ABOUT TIME EVERYONE KNEW ABOUT UPCOMING RETRO EVENTS

SEPTEMBER '04

Back In Time Live

Date: 11 September
Location: Jerwood Hall, LSO St Luke's, 161 Old Street, London, EC1V 9NG
Price: £25
It's cutting it a bit fine, but there's still time to make this fantastic event where you can listen to classic remixed C64 music by the likes of Rob Hubbard, Ben Daglish and Jon Hare.

OCTOBER '04

The Classic Computer and Gaming Show (CCAG)

Date: 23 October
Location: St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 5885 Hopkins Road, Mentor, Ohio, USA
Price: Free
A popular event for casual gamers and serious sellers, the CCAG has been running since 2000 and will feature plenty of vendors and speakers. UK gamers will need a plane ticket, mind…

Eurocon 2004

Date: 29-31 Oct
Location: Ibis-Accor Hotel, Scheveninger, Holland
Price: Unconfirmed
This year's Eurocon event will feature extensive trade sessions, the ability to compete against other gamers on classic games, as well as a quiz and auction. Again, UK gamers will need air fares. Or ferry fares. Your choice.

Midway Arcade Treasures 2

Date: 29 October
Publisher: Midway
Price: £14.99
The next *Arcade Treasures* compendium will feature 20 more classic titles and is a must for retro gamers. A third title has yet to be confirmed, but when it happens we'll let you know.

FEBRUARY '05

Retrovision

Date: 11-14 Feb
Location: The George Hotel, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1AF
Price: £10-£25
Next year's Retrovision is looking like being yet another four days of great classic gaming. Competitions will be held on the likes of the Dreamcast, Commodore 64 and the Vic20. There'll be plenty of traders and stalls and you can guarantee that there'll be plenty of classic games to play. Who knows, you may even see Jeff Minter hanging around…

JULY '05

GCE UK

Date: 30-31 July
Location: Unconfirmed
Price: Unconfirmed
After the success of this year's event, we've been told that another GCE is now a certainty. It's not known who'll be opening the event, but it looks like GCE UK is keen to get hold of Dominik Diamond.

If you know of, or are hosting, any other events, please contact Darran Jones at darranj@paragon.co.uk

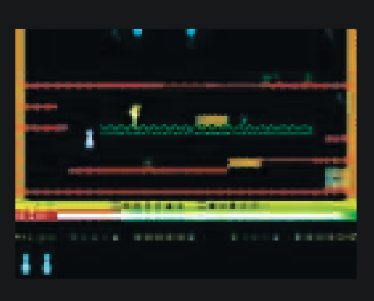




Unhappy because we haven't covered your favourite game yet? Don't despair, as all that's about to change… Every month you'll be able to vote for the title you'd like to see covered in our 'Greatest Retro Game Ever' feature. We'll give you a list of choices, and you'll have three votes. Your first choice will net five points, second will receive three, while the last will get one. Whichever title achieves the most points will become next month's 'Greatest Retro Game Ever'. You can vote by emailing darranj@paragon.co.uk, or by visiting the retro forum at www.gamestm.co.uk.

This month you can choose from the following Spectrum titles:

- Aliens
- Jet Set Willy
- Manic Miner
- Sabre Wulf
- Back To Skool
- Laser Squad
- Robocop
- Turbo Esprit



Website Of The Month

SCOURING THE INTERNET FOR RETRO GOODNESS CAN BE A DAUNTING PROSPECT, SO WE'LL MAKE THINGS EASIER BY FINDING IT FOR YOU. THIS ISSUE, WE ENTER THE WORLD OF SPECTRUM

This is without a doubt the most comprehensive Spectrum site that you could hope to find. Featuring a staggering amount of information and covering practically every Spectrum item known to man, World Of Spectrum is a deep well of knowledge. It's even possible to play many classic games online, with only a few companies like Codemasters and Rare not allowing their titles to be used.

Boasting all sorts of emulators, utilities and features, as well as an essential forum, World Of Spectrum is simply superb. If you have a weekend free (and you'll need it) you could do a lot worse than trawl through this excellent site. Visit www.worldofspectrum.org to see what all the fuss is about.



Fanzine Corner

EVERY ISSUE, GAMES™ WILL BE LOOKING AT THE UNSUNG HEROES WHO SLAVE AWAY ON THEIR OWN RETRO FANZINES. THIS MONTH WE BROWSE THROUGH THE EXCELLENT ZXF

ZXF is a site and fanzine dedicated to Sir Clive Sinclair's 8-bit wonder, the Spectrum – currently on its seventh issue,



this terrific fanzine starts off with a full hardware price list and just gets better. There's an in-depth look at Spectrum music and emulators, an article on a new Spectrum clone that's just been built, and plenty of new games are reviewed.

Well written and containing plenty of interesting information, ZXF is a top read. While it can be downloaded for free, we recommend that you consider buying it for a measly £1 to fund its future endeavours. More information, as well as the magazine itself, can be found at www.zxf.cjb.net/

Gone But Not Forgotten

We get all misty-eyed about relics of the videogame industry of yesteryear that have disappeared from the gaming scene…

Grandstand Electronic Games

Back in the early Eighties, Grandstand's handheld LCD games could be found in playgrounds up and down the country. Formed by the The Adam Leisure Group, Grandstand simply borrowed titles from other companies; the company logo was then added and the games' names were changed to get round copyright issues. As a result you could play titles like *Munchman* and *Mini Munchman*, which were basically *Pac-Man* clones, and *Crazy Kong*, a derivative of *Donkey Kong*.

Many games, such as the popular *Astro Wars*, were licensed from Epoch and can now fetch handsome prices on the likes of eBay. As enjoyable as the likes of *Munchman*, *Astro Wars*, *Star Force* and *Caveman* were though, our favourite has to be the excellent *Tron*. Featuring several different modes of play (we're fans of the Light Cycles) this Tomy title – it was distributed by Grandstand – was utterly superb and played like a dream. Now if only we'd kept it mint in the box…



THE £50 CHALLENGE

It's amazing what you can get for the price of a new game – here's this month's top buy



The ever-popular eBay was our first port of call (we got up too late for the local car boot sale) and the aim was to find a Mega CD2 and, ideally, a few games. Unfortunately, most auctions were finishing at around the £70 mark and it appeared that our quest would prove fruitless.

Luckily for us, perseverance won out and we eventually found a boxed machine (which in itself is something of a rarity) with *Ground Zero Texas, Thunder Hawk* and *Road Avenger*, not to mention a Mega Drive II and several Mega Drive titles (including *Flashback*). The final asking price? A mere £30 – a bargain if ever there was one. With any luck, next month we'll be up in time for the boot sale…



Retro REMAKE

In a regular new feature we'll be looking at a classic game that's received a makeover for a new generation of gamers. Wanting to get the lowdown on their remake of Robocop – Robocop 2D – we chat with Eric, Brian and Allan Park of Park Productions.

Q) HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO REMAKE ROBOCOP?

A) We planned to enter the 2003 remakes competition at www.remakes.org and decided to remake an 8-bit game from our first computer, the Amstrad CPC464. Searching through and loading up tapes on our two Amstrads we found *Robocop* by Ocean. The tape version is a multi-loader so this was one element that could be improved, and with the new Xbox/PS2/PC/GBA and mobile game announced we thought it would be fun to challenge the big game developers. Also, Ocean's *Robocop* is one of our top favourite games, which, when remaking a game, is always a good thing as you will be playing it for months.

Q) HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO CODE?

A) *Robocop 2D* was programmed from scratch in Blitz Basic and took over a year to complete. The enemy and bullet collision detection proved to be more difficult than we first thought and resulted in only a one-level demo being entered in the Remakes competition. After the competition and with many requests from remakes.org and robocoparchive.com to complete the game, *Robocop 2D v1.0* was released on 4 July this year.

Q) HAVE YOU HAD ANY RESPONSE FROM THE ORIGINAL PROGRAMMERS?

A) No, but we have had a lot of response from players requesting a sequel, and even one player who plays *Robocop 2D* in an arcade cabinet!

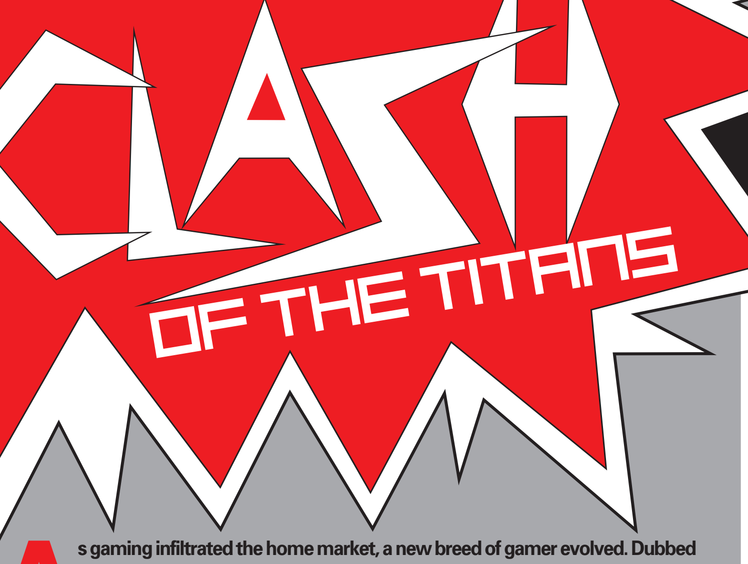
Q) WERE THERE ANY PROBLEMS GETTING THE RIGHTS TO THE MOVIE SECTIONS?

A) The movie sections were planned to be in the game from the start as FMV was not possible on a 64K computer. *Robocop 2D* is purely a fan-made game for *Robocop* and retro game fans and no profit is made from it. Very rarely, though, are rights to use movie material even given to the top game developers. I think movie-licensed games should have movie and audio clips from the film it comes from and not just be a standard game engine with a movie name stuck to it.

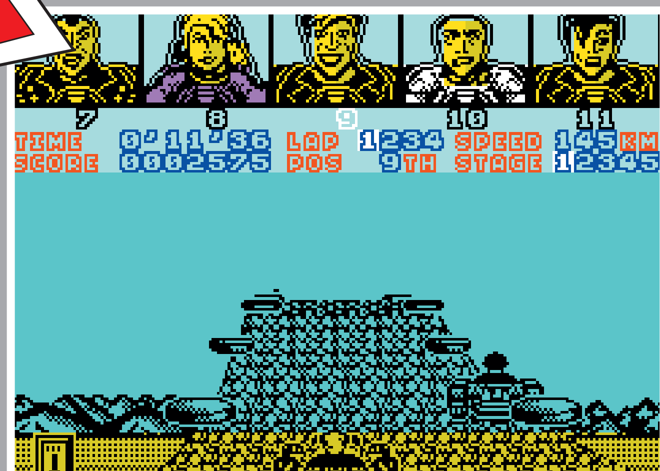
Q) ANY OTHER GAMES IN THE PIPELINE THAT YOU COULD TELL US ABOUT?

We are currently working on a remake of the Amstrad and Spectrum game *Prison Riot* by Players Premier, entitled *Break Free*, for the 2004 Remakes competition. Originally released in 1990, the game has the player running around a prison trying to stop riots and is based on the more famous *Joe Blade* series.

Robocop 2D can be downloaded from www.parkproductions.btinternet.co.uk/robocopt.htm



POWER DRIFT



As gaming infiltrated the home market, a new breed of gamer evolved. Dubbed the 'fanboy', he associated himself with a certain genre, machine or even a developer or publisher, and then ridiculed all that opposed him. First recorded in playgrounds in the early Eighties, typical arguments revolved around who had the better machine, or which game looked best on which format. We aim to put a stop to years of petty squabbling by finding the definitive versions of some classic titles. This month, we look at the 8-bit computer versions of Sega's over-the-top racer *Power Drift*.

ROUND 1: VISUALS

COMMODORE 64: Although the C64 version looks pretty ugly, it manages to move along at a fair old lick and in doing so creates a great feeling of speed. The tracks themselves look rather sparse and lack some of the detail of their 8-bit peers, but as far as capturing the speed of the original goes, no other version comes close. The winner by a country mile…

SPECTRUM: To be honest, none of the 8-bit systems were going to be able to emulate the sheer thrill of Sega's fun racer, but at least each machine tried its hardest. Although the Spectrum version lacks the vibrant colours of its peers, it features large, cartoony sprites and a reasonably convincing sense of speed. A solid effort.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: Despite having the most colourful visuals and firmly capturing the look of the original game, *Power Drift* on the Amstrad fails to convince once you actually start playing. Your racer chugs along at a very sedate pace and lacks some of the excitement and sensation of speed that the C64 and Spectrum versions manage.

WINNER: COMMODORE 64
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

ROUND 2: AUDIO

COMMODORE 64: There's a clear winner in this department, mainly because this is the only version to have its own in-game music. The C64's SID chip has been put to great use and delivers some bouncy tunes and convincing spot effects. It's still early, but the C64 version is already racing ahead of the pack.

SPECTRUM: Starting off with the jaunty title tune, *Power Drift* on the Spectrum actually sounds really nice. There's a decent array of sound effects on offer, and while it can't hope to match the sonics of the C64 version, this is surprisingly competent all the same.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: This is more of an improvement. Though there isn't any in-game music, the title tune is a lot livelier than the Spectrum's and features much more solid spot effects. It's still a ridiculously long way off from the aural excitement of the arcade game, but that was always going to be a tall order. A respectable second behind the superlative C64.

WINNER: COMMODORE 64
RUNNER UP: AMSTRAD

ROUND 3: GAMEPLAY

COMMODORE 64: Tight collision detection and some responsive controls are just a few of the joys you'll encounter when playing *Power Drift* on the C64. While it's safe to say that none of the computers are powerful enough to do the original arcade game justice, the C64 version at least proves itself to be a very competent racer.

SPECTRUM: Although very enjoyable, there are a few problems that stop the Spectrum version from taking the overall top slot. Collision detection is sometimes a problem and you'll often find yourself clipping opponents that you're actually well clear of. It's a small niggle, though, and *Power Drift* is otherwise great fun.

AMSTRAD CPC 464: Unfortunately, the same problem that destroyed *OutRun* on the Amstrad has again raised its ugly head and has severely dented this machine's chances. The sheer lack of speed totally kills any excitement you might be able to amass while playing and you're quickly left with a very dull racer that fails to do the game or the CPC any justice.

WINNER: COMMODORE 64
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM

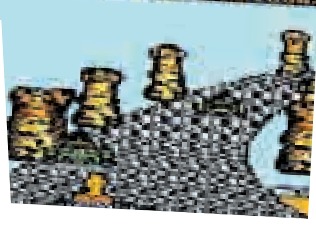


With three straight wins, it couldn't really be anything else but the Commodore 64. With the likes of *Gryzor*, *Renegade* and *Chase HQ* all proving to be extremely poor arcade conversions, we're pleased that *Power Drift* has finally gone some way to redressing the balance.

Commodore 64

▼ With superior sound, visuals and gameplay, *Power Drift* on the C64 is the best version.







POWER DRIFT (Arcade) Sega, 1988 – Japanese arcade flyer

SPOILING FOR A FIGHT, WE PUSH UP OUR SLEEVES, POLISH OUR KNUCKLE-DUSTERS AND LOOK BACK AT OUR FAVOURITE SCROLLING FIGHTERS

It started with a FIST

Once upon a time, it was impossible to walk into an arcade or visit a friend's house without playing at least one scrolling fighter before you left. From pummelling your mate senseless in *Double Dragon*'s climax to cutting a brutal swathe of destruction through Capcom's *The Punisher*, scrolling fighters delivered an exhilarating experience that was often unmatched by other genres and helped to hide their often short playtime, linear level design and simplistic gameplay.

As the years progressed and gamers' tastes changed, the scrolling fighter evolved with them, although the principal objective – defeat as many opponents as you can – always remained the same. Indeed, titles like *Final Fight*, *Streets Of Rage 2* and *Guardian Heroes* all helped take the genre in new and exciting directions (especially in the case of Treasure's *Guardian Heroes*) and it's a species that seems to be in no danger of dying out.

Titles like *Dynasty Wars 4*, *Kung Fu Chaos* and *Viewtiful Joe* are just a few of the more recent games that continue to evolve or even revolutionise the genre and while it might not be as popular as it was in the mid Eighties and early Nineties, it's obvious that the scrolling fighter is here to stay.

"Gentlemen, welcome to Fight Club"

In no particular order, we present ten of the greatest scrolling fighters ever made. Of course, it's impossible to list every title (even in the Family Tree on page 140) but the games we have chosen either set new standards in the genre or were simply great fun to play. If there are any particular favourites you think we've missed out, don't hesitate to contact us at the usual address…

▼ You walk along, you meet people, you batter them senseless – it's a timeless formula.







KUNG FU MASTER

Technically, Taito's *Fighting Roller* meets the requirements for being crowned the first scrolling arcade fighter; for many, though, Irem's *Kung Fu Master* (called *Spartan X* in Japan and based on a Jackie Chan film of the same name) is the game that really got the genre rolling.

While its gameplay was as simple as its plot – rescue your girlfriend from a gang of thugs – *Kung Fu Master* was gripping stuff. From the off you were assaulted by wave upon wave of henchmen, with their sole purpose being to take your health. Should a goon get too close, he'd start depleting your precious energy bar. Frantic joystick waggling would shrug him off, but there were plenty of others to take his place.

Knife throwers, snakes and even dragons were just a few of your opponents, but all paled in comparison to the bosses at the end of each stage. Hard as nails, they were normally more than strong enough to send you back to the beginning of the stage. You didn't mind, though – it was just another excuse to punch and kick for all you were worth…

▲ Your lovely lady friend, Silvia, was depending on you to give these pyjamaed goons a good shoeing. What more reason do you need?

Developer: Irem
Format: Arcade
Release: 1984



KARATEKA

Developer: Jordan Mechner
Format: Apple II
Release: 1984

First released on the Apple II in 1984, *Karateka* was the stunning debut by *Prince Of Persia* creator Jordan Mechner. Featuring wonderfully smooth animation, a compelling story and some great cut-scenes, this was unlike anything else around.

Your character had a decent array of moves and looked superb as he executed his kicks and punches. Indeed, the fluid animation made for some wonderful gameplay and it was a real shame whenever a fight ended.

While there were only three locations to fight through, they were fairly expansive and contained plenty of enemies. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of *Karateka* is how well Mechner integrated his story into the game – the tale enthralled you with its well-placed music and dynamic cut-scenes. This was a defining moment for the genre.

TARGET RENEGADE

Developer: Imagine
Format: Various
Release: 1988

Okay, so only the Commodore 64 version actually scrolled, but this was arguably the greatest 8-bit fighter ever made and is fondly remembered by many gamers.

Though it added little to the genre, *Target Renegade* was made with such panache that you couldn't help but be impressed. Teaming up with a mate (unless you had the C64 version) you'd fight your way through seductive women of the night, burly bikers and some vicious dogs until you reached your nemesis, Mr Big. You had some great moves – kneeing your opponents in the nuts still makes us smile – and a variety of weapons ensured your character's knuckles didn't get too bruised.

Aside from its great visuals and sound, what really made *Target Renegade* so enjoyable was the satisfaction you got from joining up with a friend and causing massive amounts of mayhem. Imagine allowed you to run rampant, and while the cartoony visuals were in stark contrast to the violent action, the concept worked superbly. Sure, it ripped off everything that came before it, but *Target Renegade* filled us with such joyful exuberance it would be wrong not to include it.



▲ Time for the rain to come and wash those lowlifes off the streets – and you're the rain. No, really, you are.



▲ Get a friend along to help and the pair of you can pummel a range of undesirables. Some would say community rehabilitation would be better for them, but there's no arguing with meathead fighters.



DOUBLE DRAGON

Developer: Technos
Format: Arcade
Release: 1987

When *Double Dragon* appeared in 1987, it was a huge breakthrough and set new standards for future scrolling fighters (at least until *Final Fight* came along).

The addition of a second player was a great touch and really gave you a sense of camaraderie as you fought your way through the game's four stages. Three different fire buttons allowed you to pull off an impressive array of moves and it was even possible to perform a devastating headbutt by double tapping the joystick left or right. Unfortunately, the headbutt and the elbow (for those who mastered it) totally unbalanced the game and made it too easy to complete. Still, if you were willing to ignore these powerful moves there was a nice selection of weapons to use (we've never got bored of throwing sticks of dynamite about), a decent range of enemies to defeat and some rather cool music.

Thanks to great gameplay, colourful visuals and instant accessibility *Double Dragon* went down a storm and went on to spawn seven other games. Although it feels slightly dated by today's standards and is stupidly easy to beat, we can't deny the impact it had on us when we first played it.

STREET GANGS

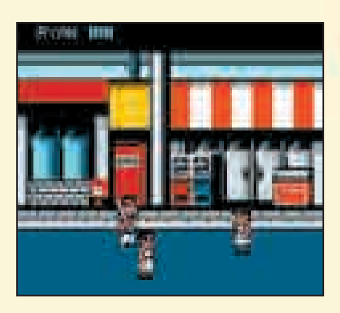
Developer: Technos
Format: NES
Release: 1989

Playing two school kids who decide to take on rival street gangs might not be the most politically correct idea today, but it was no problem for *Street Gangs* back in 1989. After Ryan's girlfriend is captured, he teams up with best mate Alex in order to kick some high-school butt.

Not content with allowing you to use a variety of weapons, *Street Gangs* also allowed you to pick up various items and throw them at your enemies for extra damage. Even your mate could be thrown at oncoming foes (although he'd take a little damage in the process) and you could guarantee that a scrap would soon break out whenever there were no enemies on screen.

What really made *Street Gangs* stand out though was its RPG elements. Once an enemy had been defeated, he'd leave behind money; you could then buy a range of food and items, which in turn would increase your stats. It was even possible to buy special moves although they cost a fair amount.

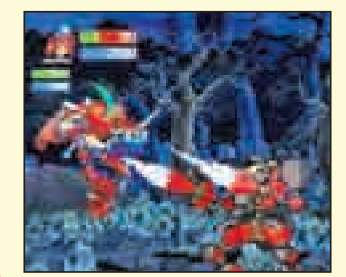
Re-entering the chunky world of *Street Gangs* is an enjoyable experience and the game's still extremely playable.



▲ High-school kids knocking seven bells out of each other? It's all perfectly healthy, you know.

GUARDIAN HEROES

Developer: Treasure
Format: Saturn
Release: 1989



Although well known for its addictive shoot-'em-ups and platformers, Treasure wasn't averse to dabbling in other genres and its first beat-'em-up was an innovative tour de force with stunning visuals, superb music and hectic gameplay.

Like *Karateka*, *Guardian Heroes* was driven by its plot – a fascinating tale that unfolded over five different endings. The real beauty of the game, though, was its great gameplay and blistering arcade-style action. As well as having light and hard attacks and a multidirectional block, you could summon magic abilities – handy when you saw the amount of enemies you had to face.

Fortunately, to help you deal with your foes, Treasure supplied you with a huge undead skeleton. Impervious to attack, your bony friend became an invaluable ally. Add combo attacks, the ability to leap into the back- and foreground to continue fighting, and an extensive levelling up process and *Guardian Heroes* was so ahead of its time, it hurt.

STREETS OF RAGE 2

Developer: Sega
Format: Mega Drive
Release: 1993

Bigger, better, faster – that's *Streets Of Rage 2* in a nutshell. After laying down some impressive groundwork with the original, Sega's sequel was one of the defining scrolling fighters of the 16-bit era.

Although apparently killed at the end of the first game, Mr X survived and kidnapped Alex in order to lead Blaze and Axel into a trap. Fortunately for the two friends, two comrades had joined them: muscly Max, and Skate, a rollerskating kid with some devastating attacks. All four fighters had a great range of special moves, could join up to unleash more powerful attacks and looked better than ever. Indeed, the huge sprites of *Streets Of Rage 2* were a world away from the puny characters of the first title, and marked a big step forward for Mega Drive titles. Our only gripe is that it was way too easy to complete.

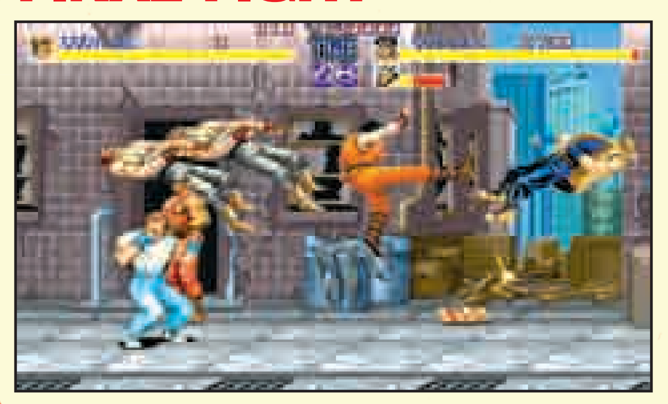




▼ Yet again, a lack of policemen on the beat means scum-fighting falls into the hands of musclebound, tooled-up citizens. For shame.



FINAL FIGHT



Developer: Capcom
Format: Arcade
Release: 1989

When the vicious Mad Gear gang kidnaps mayor Mike Haggar's daughter, Jessica, the ex-wrestler-turned-civic leader grabs Jessica's squeeze Cody and best mate Guy and sets off for revenge. Each playable character in *Final Fight* had his own strengths and weaknesses, was extremely well animated and could unleash a devastating special attack by pressing the attack and jump buttons at the same time.

The streets of Metro City were teeming with scum and Capcom added some much needed identity to the genre by giving your opponents names and their own energy bars. With fantastic visuals and bone-crunching sound (and some wonderfully intuitive gameplay), it's little wonder *Final Fight* was such a success, spawning a slew of imitators.

Capcom itself was one of the major offenders and constantly revisited the genre it had effectively reinvigorated. Often imitated, but for many never bettered, *Final Fight* is as playable today as it ever was.

GOLDEN AXE

Developer: Sega
Format: Arcade
Release: 1989

Along with *Final Fight* and *Double Dragon*, *Golden Axe* is arguably one of the best-known scrolling arcade fighters. Controlling either a tenacious dwarf, ferocious barbarian or nimble Amazon, you had to negotiate a series of imaginative levels and track down the evil Death Adder. You'd face off against huge giants, massive sword-wielding knights and deadly skeletons until you eventually met the deadly tyrant himself.

As well as being handy with melee weapons, each character was also able to unleash some potent magic. Gilius the Dwarf had mastery over lightning, Ax Battler could call upon awesome earth magic, while the Amazon Tyris Flare would unleash devastating fire attacks. Characters could boost their magic by collecting potions, or by beating up the pixies that appeared during the game.

If going round on foot didn't appeal, you could hop on a mythical beast and continue the carnage in a frenzy of fireball hurling and tail thrashing. Later console and arcade sequels failed to capture the magic of the original, but *Golden Axe* will always have a place in our hearts.



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES



Developer: Konami
Format: Arcade
Release: 1989

With the cartoon series proving so popular, it was inevitable that an arcade game starring those lovable turtles would turn up. Fortunately, rather then simply ride on the licence, Konami created a highly enjoyable brawler that allowed up to four players to compete at once.

From the moment the catchy theme tune blared out of the speakers, you knew Konami wouldn't disappoint and you were soon facing off against hordes of Foot ninjas and well-known enemies like Be-Bop, Rocksteady and Shredder. Having all four turtles fighting at the same time was a huge bonus, and even when the screen was full of characters there was virtually no slowdown.

Enemies came at you thick and fast and you needed skilled reflexes (and plenty of button bashing) in order to finally reach Shredder. Like many other fighters of the time, the gameplay was straightforward, but the game was so much fun it didn't really matter.

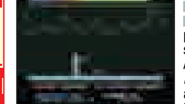
Scrolling beat-'em-ups

Family Tree

Once insanely popular, the scrolling fighter is only now starting to make a comeback with titles like *Viewtiful Joe* and *Double Dragon Advance*. Spanning 20 years and some fantastic classics (along with some real stinkers), we take a look back at the genre's chequered past.

LICENCES

PROJECT A



- MSX
- 1984
- Is Jackie Chan the patron saint of scrolling fighters? Along with *Kung Fu Master, Project A* was an early scrolling fighter based on one of his films. It's extremely simplistic next to *Karateka*, but still good fun. Finding a copy may prove hard, though…

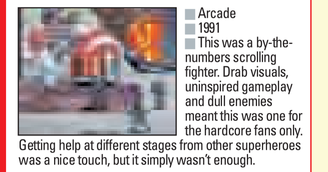
BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

- Various
- 1986
- While it had some nice touches – like switching between three characters – this was a duff movie licence. With dull gameplay and pathetic graphics, we've included *Big Trouble* so you can all laugh at it for being rubbish. Watch the film instead.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

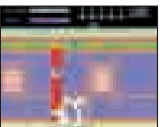
- Arcade
- 1989
- Four-player action, stylish visuals and some great tunes made Konami's Ninja Turtle game very hot property. It seemed like every arcade had at least one Turtle machine and who could blame them? The SNES titles were superb too.

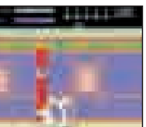
CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE AVENGERS



- Arcade
- 1991
- This was a by-the-numbers scrolling fighter. Drab visuals, uninspired gameplay and dull enemies meant this was one for the hardcore fans only. Getting help at different stages from other superheroes was a nice touch, but it simply wasn't enough.

KUNG FU MASTER





- Arcade
- 1984
- Called *Spartan X* in Japan and based on a Jackie Chan film, *Kung Fu Master* featured hordes of enemies and some rock-hard gameplay. Foes would come at you thick and fast, so steady nerves and quick reflexes were needed.

MY HERO

- Arcade
- 1985
- Although it was a laugh being able to knock bottles into multiple enemies and send them flying off screen, *My Hero* was just way too tough. Like *Kung Fu Master*, you faced loads of enemies, but the lack of an energy bar made it annoyingly difficult.

P.O.W.: PRISONERS OF WAR

- Arcade
- 1988
- Prison breaks are never easy, but when you're in a SNK game at least they're fun. Not content with beating up hordes of soldiers? It's possible to grab dropped guns in order to carry on the carnage. Great visuals and tight gameplay made this a winner

SPLATTER HOUSE

- Arcade
- 1989
- While horror had been used in titles like *Kyros*, it had never been as visceral as the carnage in *Splatter House*. Taking control of a Jason Vorhees look-alike, you dispensed all manner of unpleasant baddies and gruesome bosses.

CRUDE BUSTER

- Arcade
- 1990
- With so many scrolling fighters out in the late Eighties and early Nineties, gimmicks were needed to stand out. Being able to throw parts of the scenery about was a nice touch, but there was little else to enjoy in this average fighter.

FIGHTING ROLLER

- Arcade
- 1983
- A scrolling racer where you played a guy on rollerskates may not sound like a great place idea, but it *is* a scrolling fighter. Admittedly, you'd often travel for ages without meeting an opponent but when you did, fisticuffs were bound to ensue.

RENEGADE

- Arcade
- 1986
- Ditching the school gang aspect of the original Japanese version, *Renegade* got a grittier, more urban look for the west. With a nifty combat system that gave you a cool back attack, this was a superb fighter.

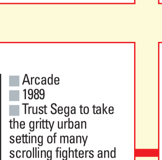
DOUBLE DRAGON

- Arcade
- 1987
- Two-player action, a surprise twist and some great weapons made for one exc ellent title. It was far too easy to complete but *Double Dragon* revitalised the genre. Sadly, most of the home versions were rubbish and didn't do this great game justice.

BAD DUDES VS DRAGON NINJA

- Arcade
- 1988
- Throwing more ninjas at you than was strictly healthy, *Bad Dudes* was another great urban brawler. It didn't add much to the genre, but was great fun and had some cool digitised speech. And who could forget that ride across the giant truck…?

DYNAMITE DUX



- Arcade
- 1989
- Trust Sega to take the gritty urban setting of many scrolling fighters and add cute ducks and bouncing moose heads… Bright visuals, hilarious enemies and great bosses were just a few delights that *Dynamite Dux* had to offer.

THE COMBATRIBES

- Arcade
- 1990
- The varying skills of each character were neat, but what really made this game stand out was its superb visuals and some ridiculously violent gameplay. Bashing heads together and swinging your enemies into their mates was all in a day's work.

KARATEKA

- Apple II, Various
- 1984
- Before *Prince Of Persia*, Jordan Mechner struck gold with this beauty. Featuring neat play mechanics and a plot told entirely with music and cut-scenes, *Karateka* was like nothing else around and was definitely a more cerebral fighter.

GUARDIAN

- Arcade
- 1986
- *Guardian* saw you control a giant robot that had to free six planets by defeating their bosses. Sadly, it was pretty poor with rubbish animation and ropey visuals – the screen constantly scrolled even if you weren't moving, which was frustrating.

TARGET RENEGADE

- Various
- 1988
- If only every 8-bit fighter had been as great as *Target Renegade*. With its cartoony visuals, over-the-top violence and superb gameplay, this was simply fantastic. Spectrum and Amstrad versions didn't scroll but had a great two-player mode.

FINAL FIGHT

- Arcade
- 1989
- With *Final Fight*, Capcom created a blueprint for all future scrolling fighters. Massive sprites, superb gameplay and plenty of neat features ensured *Final Fight*s reputation remains untarnished to this day. Just don't mention the SNES one-player game…

STREETS OF RAGE

- Mega Drive
- 1990
- Featuring hordes of enemies, a smashing techno soundtrack and a great two-player mode, *Streets Of Rage* was a two-fingered salute at the single-player *Final Fight* on the SNES. The characters were a bit weedy, but great bosses saved the day.

GLADIATOR

- Arcade
- 1986
- *Gladiator* was a bizarre cross between a one-on-one beat-'em-up and a scrolling fighter. It featured a nice combat system that saw you attacking your opponents with different sword thrusts and featured huge, impressive sprites.

FANTASY

ALTERED BEAST

- Arcade
- 1988
- Although rather boring, Sega's *Altered Beast* featured some lovely transformation sequences that saw you changing into powerful beasts like Werewolves and Dragons. Also received a so-so Mega Drive conversion.

GOLDEN AXE

- Arcade
- 1989
- Thieving pixies, devastating magic and exotic locations were all in Sega's *Golden Axe*. Being able to knock foes off their bizarre steeds and steal their rides was a great touch, and some of the bosses were massive. A true classic.

ROCK 'N RAGE



- Arcade
- 1986
- When their lead singer is abducted by a huge demon, it makes sense for the band's guitarists to go after her. Featuring a multi-scrolling playing area and masses of enemies, *Rock 'N Rage* was a quirky fighter, but still quite enjoyable to play.

MISCELLANEOUS

SAMURAI WARRIOR: THE BATTLES OF USAGI YOJIMBO

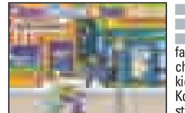
- C64
- 1988
- *Usagi Yojimbo* is one of those titles that makes you glad to be a gamer. Fantastic music, great cartoony visuals, in-depth gameplay and the ability to play as a samurai rabbit meant this was excellent.

STREET GANGS



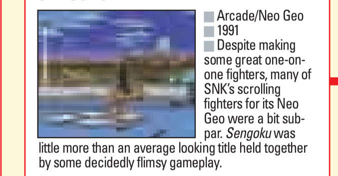
- NES
- 1989
- *Street Gangs* saw you teaming up with your best mate to rescue your girlfriend from rival gangs. Cute (if somewhat dumpy) characters and some nice RPG elements (such as increasing stats and buying special moves) made for a great title.

THE SIMPSONS



- Arcade
- 1991
- Featuring all our favourite Simpsons characters and some kick-ass gameplay, Konami's fighter is still played today. The ability to team up with another player was a great touch, but the characters and great action really made *The Simpsons* so good.

SENGOKU

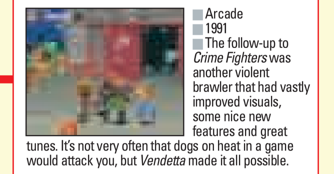


- Arcade/Neo Geo
- 1991
- Despite making some great one-on-one fighters, many of SNK's scrolling fighters for its Neo Geo were a bit sub-par. *Sengoku* was little more than an average looking title held together by some decidedly flimsy gameplay.

CAPTAIN COMMANDO

- Arcade
- 1991
- For many, Capcom was king of the scrolling beat-'em-up and this was yet another terrific example to cement the fans' claims. Vibrant graphics, nasty violence and sublime controls continued to show other developers how to make great games.

VENDETTA

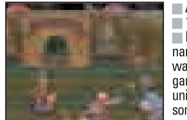


- Arcade
- 1991
- The follow-up to *Crime Fighters* was another violent brawler that had vastly improved visuals, some nice new features and great tunes. It's not very often that dogs on heat in a game would attack you, but *Vendetta* made it all possible.

CADILLACS & DINOSAURS

- Arcade
- 1991
- Based on the popular comic, *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* saw you facing off against poachers in order to save captured dinosaurs. Attack the reptiles and they'd turn on you, although you could always escape in your Cadillac…

NINJA CLOWNS



- Arcade
- 1991
- If you think the name sounds stupid, wait until you play the game. Featuring a unique look and some Monty Python-esque humour, *Ninja Clowns* is one of the weirdest scrolling fighters that we've ever played and is well worth hunting down.

THE PUNISHER

- Arcade
- 1993
- Capcom's *The Punisher* was a brutally violent fighter that perfectly captured the anti-hero it was based on. Featuring buckets of blood, some nasty moves and hordes of enemies, the action came thick and fast and so did the excitement.

KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND

- Arcade
- 1992
- Based on the Knights of the Round Table, this was yet another Capcom fighter. Featuring plenty of sword-swinging action and some great animated characters, this and *King Of Dragons* were ideal blueprints for Capcom's D&D titles.

RUSHING BEAT

- SNES
- 1992
- Fans of *Final Fight* felt at home with Jaleco's spin on the popular fighter. With similar locations and enemies to Capcom's brawler, this was more rip-off than homage. The sequels upped the ante with more players, better visuals and more moves.

STREETS OF RAGE 2

- Mega Drive
- 1993
- Apart from being too easy, Sega's sequel got everything right and delivered one of the greatest beat-'em-ups of the 16-bit era. Massive sprites, great new characters, fantastic sound and cool new moves meant this was wonderful.

ARABIAN FIGHT



- Arcade
- 1992
- Although its gameplay was fairly generic, Sega's *Arabian Fight* stood out thanks to its graphical style. The game was full of impressive scaling techniques, with characters leaping off screen in an attempt to stop you in your tracks.

GUARDIANS OF THE HOOD



- Arcade
- 1992
- The only thing that made this stand out was its *Pit Fighter*-style digitised graphics. Sadly, even this couldn't save it from being a rubbish fighter and it soon slipped into obscurity. Only worth playing again if you want a good laugh.

ALIEN VS PREDATOR

- Arcade
- 1994
- Capcom has been accused of churning out identikit fighters but when they're as enjoyable as *Alien Vs Predator*, why grumble? The CPS II board delivered some stunning visuals and the gameplay was madder than ever. It was fairly easy but had depth.

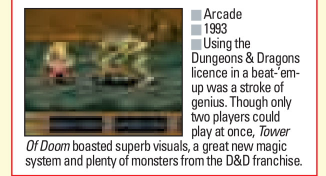
STREETS OF RAGE 3

- Mega Drive
- 1994
- Sega's third outing onto those rage-filled streets was business as usual and despite having some unusual characters, little made it stand out from its peers. It now goes for high amounts on eBay, but that's more due to its original rarity in the UK than its quality.

BATTLE TOADS & DOUBLE DRAGON: THE ULTIMATE TEAM

- NES
- 1993
- After finding some success in arcades with *Battle Toads*, the amphibians made their way to the SNES and NES. This NES outing saw the toads teaming up with the *Double Dragon* brothers and was a hit.

D&D: TOWER OF DOOM



- Arcade
- 1993
- Using the Dungeons & Dragons licence in a beat-'em-up was a stroke of genius. Though only two players could play at once, *Tower Of Doom* boasted superb visuals, a great new magic system and plenty of monsters from the D&D franchise.

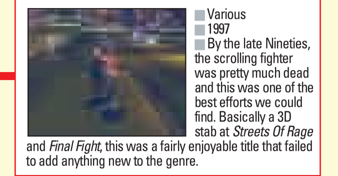
MIGHTY FINAL FIGHT

- NES
- 1993
- Parodies of games have always been popular and *Mighty Final Fight* was no different. Cartoony sprites that perfectly captured the sprit of the original characters, some cool little tunes and great gameplay made this an enjoyable NES game.

DIE HARD ARCADE

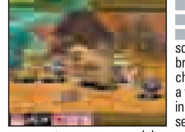
- Arcade
- 1996
- Also known as *Dynamite Deka* in Japan, this wasn't the most accurate of movie tie-ins but it was very enjoyable. Bold visuals combined nicely with the frenetic feet-and-fists action to create a title that we couldn't help but pump 10ps into.

FIGHTING FORCE



- Various
- 1997
- By the late Nineties, the scrolling fighter was pretty much dead and this was one of the best efforts we could find. Basically a 3D stab at *Streets Of Rage* and *Final Fight*, this was a fairly enjoyable title that failed to add anything new to the genre.

D&D: SHADOW OVER MYSTARA



- Arcade
- 1996
- Four players on screen as well as two brand new characters were just a few of the delights in Capcom's D&D sequel. The gameplay was as strong as ever and there were plenty of new spells to use and monsters to fight.

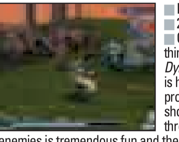
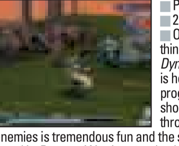
GUARDIAN HEROES

- Saturn
- 1998
- It's typical that one of the greatest beat-'em-ups ever appeared on a machine that hardly anyone cared about. Treasure redefined the genre and added plenty of innovation to what had become a rapidly stagnating genre.

THE BOUNCER

- PS2
- 2001
- Proof that even the mighty Square could slip up, *The Bouncer* was a derivative title that promised much but delivered little. There's no doubt that it looks and sounds stunning, but the gameplay was as dull as ditchwater and it was over far too quickly.

DYNASTY WARRIORS

- PS2
- 2001
- One of the greatest things about the *Dynasty Wars* series is how far it's progressed in such a short time. Fighting through hordes of enemies is tremendous fun and the strategy elements found in *Dynasty Warriors 4* make this a must-have.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

- Various
- 2003
- Like many old fads the Turtles are popular again, so Konami made another stab at capturing the glory of its original fighters. The home versions didn't add anything new but the GBA version was completely different and much more enjoyable.

SPIKE OUT: BATTLE STREET

- Xbox
- 2004
- Although little has been revealed about it, we have high hopes for Sega's brawler. The original arcade game was great fun and if this is still going to offer online play, it could provide just the shot in the arm that the genre needs.

VIEWTIFUL JOE

- GameCube
- 2003
- Trust Capcom to totally reinvent the scrolling beat-'em-up and do it with such style. It might be tough, but *Viewtiful Joe's* stylish visuals, insane combos and gripping gameplay quickly grab you and refuse to let go.

DOUBLE DRAGON ADVANCE

- GBA
- 2003
- Despite featuring updated visuals and all-new game modes, we couldn't really get excited about *Double Dragon Advance*. It might have been the annoying button layout, or the fact that it's still too easy to complete, but we definitely prefer the original.

LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING

- Various
- 2003
- Featuring superb presentation, an all-star cast and plenty of cut-scenes from the film, this was EA's second *LOTR* title. Although the game featured a two-player option, the camera caused problems and the gameplay was as generic as ever.

SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR SPEEDS: 'Tom' 26.591 MHz, 'Jerry' 26.6 MHz, Motorola 68000 13.295MHz
TOTAL COLOURS: 16.8 million
POLYGONS: 10,000 Gouraud Shaded
Max Resolution: 800X576 (most games use 320X240)
PORTS: Cartridge Slot/Expansion Port, RF Video Output, Two Controller Ports, Video Edge Connector (supporting NTSC and PAL) allowing for RGB, S-Video and composite outputs
CARTRIDGE SIZE: Max size 6Mb (all games use 1, 2 or 4Mb)
RAM: 2Mb fast page mode DRAM

WE TAKE A LOOK AT ATARI'S SWANSONG

For many cynical gamers the Atari Jaguar's success can be summed up with just two games: *Alien Vs Predator* and *Tempest 2000*. While it's certainly true that both titles were extremely impressive for their time, you could actually find quite a few class titles for Atari's ill-fated machine if you were prepared to look hard enough. For now, though, we'll head back to the mid-Eighties, when work on what would become Atari's last home console started.

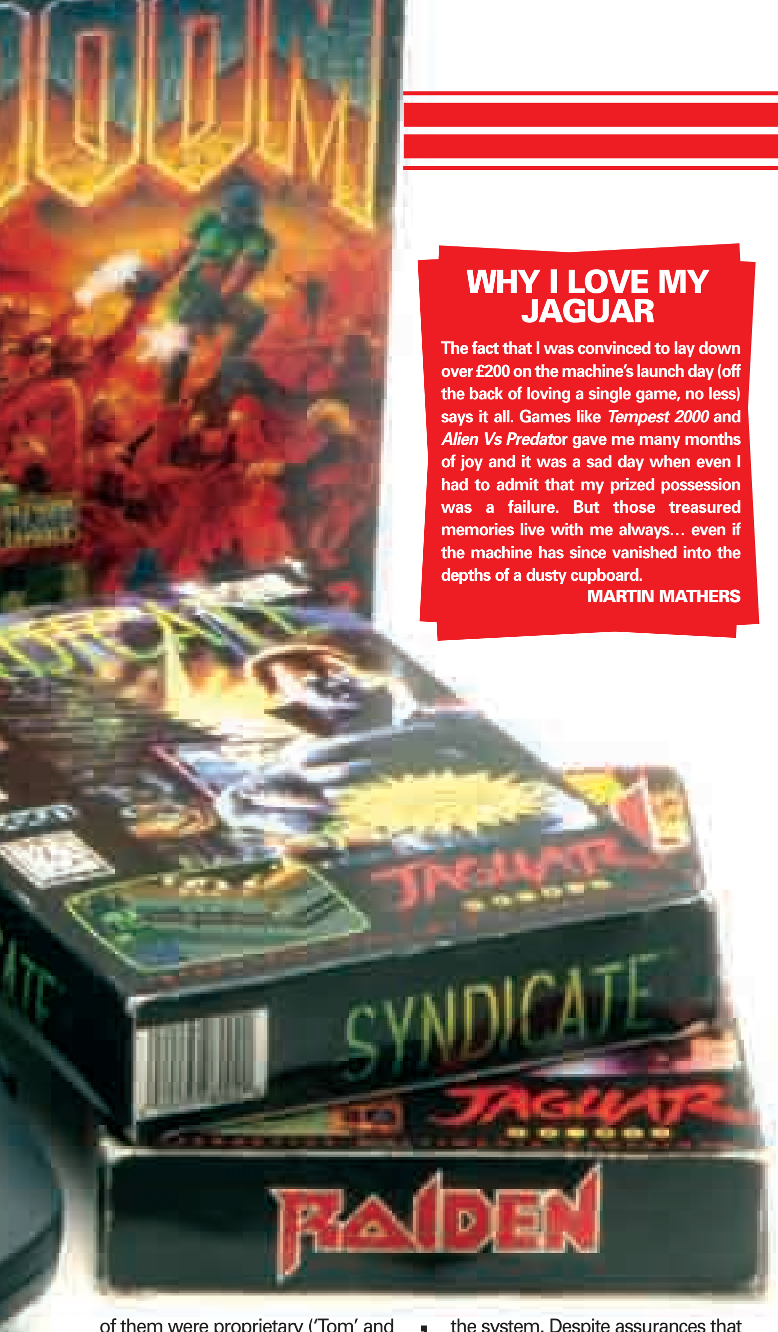
Computer design company Flare was founded by Martin Brennan and John Mathieson in 1986, and it was soon developing a new multiprocessor games console. When the project was finished, Flare decided that it wanted to make the machine more powerful to let it compete against the home market, but lacked the necessary funding. Atari saw the machine's potential and agreed to set up a new studio, Flare 2. In 1991, rumours began to circulate that Atari was working on a new 32-bit console called the Panther. However, work on the Jaguar was progressing much faster than on the Panther and when Atari made a formal announcement about its new machine at the summer CES of 1991, it revealed that the Panther had been dropped in favour of the 64-bit Jaguar.

The Jaguar was due to launch in 1993 and excited gamers expected great things from Atari's new machine, especially as it was to be so much more powerful than its peers. There was no doubt that the Jaguar was an impressive machine, even if Atari's claims that it was a 64-bit system were a little misleading. The Jaguar had five processors; two

WORST JOYPAD EVER?

They say a thing of beauty is a joy forever, so it's little wonder that the Jaguar's joypad is no more. Feeling like a breezeblock and uncomfortable to hold, the Jaguar pad was oddly cumbersome – what was Atari thinking? The overlays were a nice touch, but the pad just felt over-complicated. One for the bargain bin.





WHY I LOVE MY JAGUAR

The fact that I was convinced to lay down over £200 on the machine's launch day (off the back of loving a single game, no less) says it all. Games like *Tempest 2000* and *Alien Vs Predator* gave me many months of joy and it was a sad day when even I had to admit that my prized possession was a failure. But those treasured memories live with me always… even if the machine has since vanished into the depths of a dusty cupboard.

MARTIN MATHERS





of them were proprietary ('Tom' and 'Jerry'), while the third was little more than a Motorola 68000 – a basic 16-bit processor. The fact that the other two processors were only 32-bit made Atari's bold 64-bit claim look a lot flimsier. Despite the confusion caused by the various chips, many developers (and Atari itself) still refer to the Jaguar as the first 64-bit machine, a tag that remains with it to this day.

With IBM agreeing to manufacture the system, the Jaguar launch went into overdrive. Keen to prove that it was a reformed company that wouldn't have to resort to burying its new console in the desert, Atari planned to spend $3 million on advertising, promised a telephone support line and pledged that over 20 third-party developers were already working on games for the system. Despite assurances that the machine would launch with *Cybermorph*, a controller and would only cost $200 (around £110), it ended up retailing for $250 (about £140). But sales were more than adequate and although retailers and the media were sceptical about Atari's claims, first impressions for the machine were favourable.

The console may have been technically impressive, but many developers were having problems with Atari's development kits due to the poorly constructed hardware having a number of bugs. One in particular was tied to the memory controller and stopped some of the Jaguar's processors executing code from the system RAM. As a result, many games suffered launch delays and then failed to live up to Atari's hype when they finally arrived.

Most gamers felt the early games looked no better than the many 16-bit titles that were already available and consumers started to lose faith in Atari's machine. Although the Jaguar boasted several killer titles like *Alien Vs Predator*, *Tempest 2000* and strong conversions of many classic 16-bit titles, the damage had been done and by the end of 1996, Atari had discontinued all support for the machine and its software.

Perhaps the saddest part of the Jaguar story is that the machine had so much potential that was never realised. Many aspects of the system (like being able to link 32 machines together, or connecting a Lynx to the Jaguar) were way ahead of their time, but Atari never seemed to know what to do with them. Fortunately, there is a (sort of) happy ending to this sad tale; due to the fact that the machine's best games could practically be counted on one hand, it's now very cheap to pick up. As a result, it's worth getting hold of one if only to see what could have been…

FROM CART TO CD

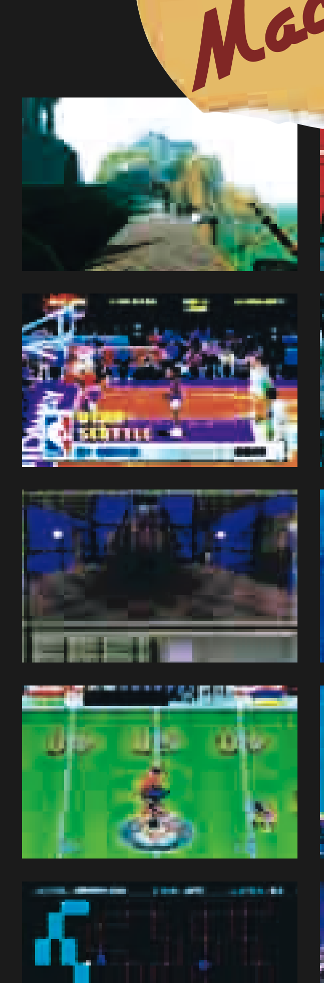
Eager to join the CD revolution, Atari released a CD-ROM add-on for the rapidly fading Jaguar in 1995. While it boasted a measly $150 price tag, a double-speed disc drive and was able to play full motion video at 24 frames per second, it failed to win over the masses. This was partly because there were hardly any games available for it and those that were released were mostly very poor and failed to take advantage of the extra storage space. The design wasn't exactly inspiring either – sitting snugly on top of the Jaguar it made the machine look like a space-age toilet.

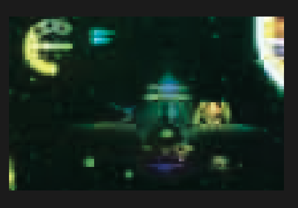


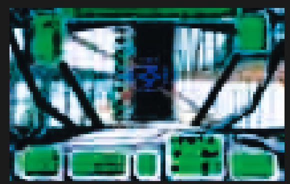

JAGUAR

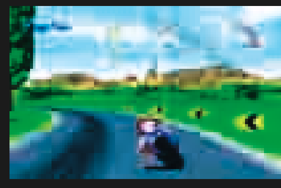
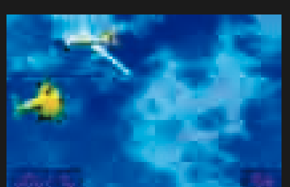
Classic Machine

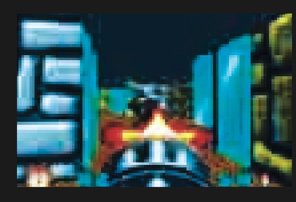
ATARI



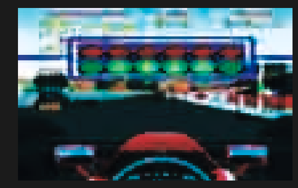
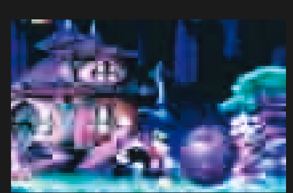
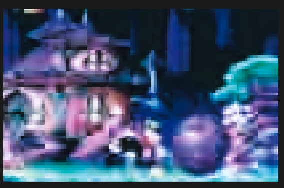
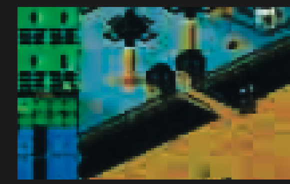


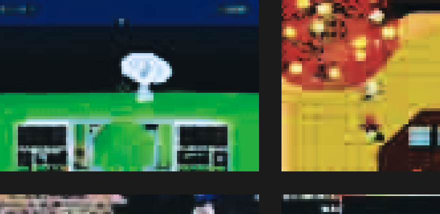
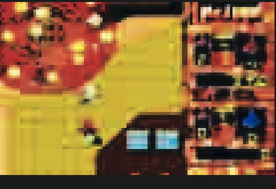
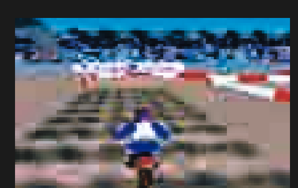
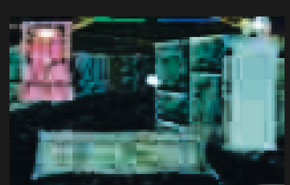



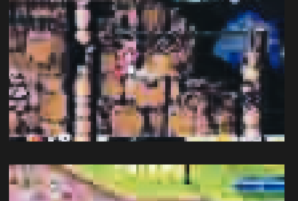
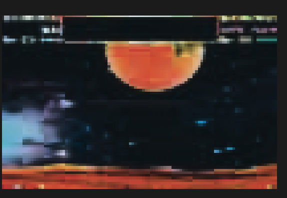
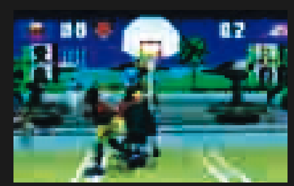
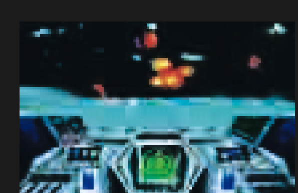
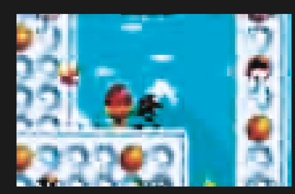
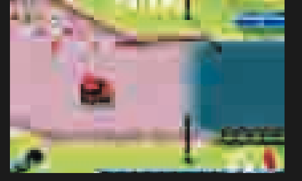




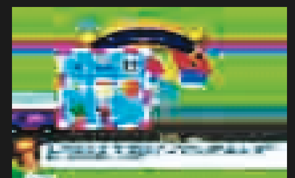
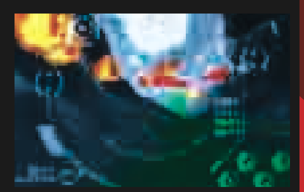



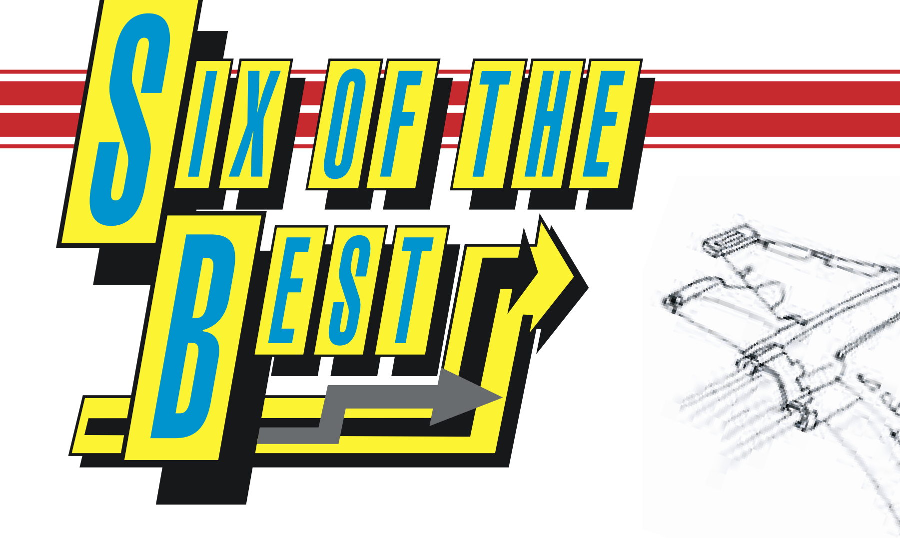




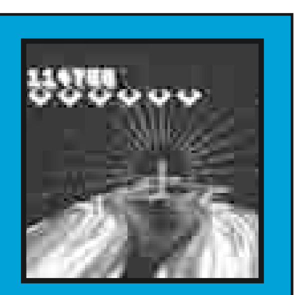
Six of the Best

CYNICS WOULD ARGUE THAT JUST FINDING SIX GOOD GAMES ON THE JAGUAR WOULD PROVE TO BE DIFFICULT, BUT HERE ARE SOME OF OUR CURRENT FAVOURITES

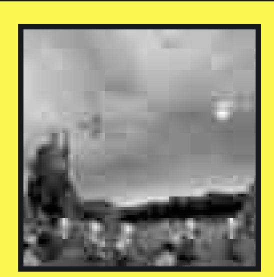
Tempest 2000

Publisher: Atari
Release: 1994

Tempest 2000 was one of the main reasons for owning a Jaguar. Jeff Minter may have a seemingly unhealthy love of llamas and all things *Tempest*-related, but if his upcoming *Unity* is anything like *Tempest 2000* then we're going to be very happy indeed. Blisteringly fast with eye-popping visuals, scorching sound and some great gameplay enhancements (all praise the mighty jump feature), *Tempest 2000* was a mind-blowing experience and is an enjoyable and frenetic blaster to this day.



Alien Vs Predator



Publisher: Atari
Year: 1994

With a rumoured 84 per cent of Jaguar owners buying this title, it was inevitable that Rebellion's superb *Alien Vs Predator* would make the grade. Featuring truly stunning visuals, masterful use of sound and some gripping gameplay, *Alien Vs Predator* was one of the Jaguar's true triple-A titles. With different objectives depending on which character you chose and some neat visual effects (like the cool Alien Vision) this classic title gave Jaguar owners something to smile about.

Battlemorph

Publisher: Atari
Release: 1995

This follow-up to *Cybermorph* was set 30 years after the original and improved on the first game in almost every way possible. With greatly improved visuals, outstanding sound effects and some enhanced gameplay, *Battlemorph* was a great example of what the little-used CD ROM add-on could achieve. Although the gameplay was similar to the original, objectives had more variety and the ability to explore underground and underwater made the huge environments feel even more immersive.



Missile Command 3D

Publisher: Atari
Release: 1995

With the lack of third-party support for the Jaguar it was inevitable that Atari would look to its expansive back catalogue for inspiration. *Missile Command 3D* was one such title, and while the original and 3D versions will only stall you for a little while, most of your time will be spent playing the excellent *VR Missile Command.* Starting in one of six bases, you have to take out the incoming missiles while juggling your ammo reserves and moving from base to base. It makes for very hectic gameplay and is great fun.



Iron Soldier

Publisher: Telegames
Year: 1997

While a late title for the Jaguar, *Iron Soldier* is a very good one and well worth looking into if you're a fan of wanton destruction. Taking control of a giant mech, you must make your way through 16 huge missions and regain control of Earth. Despite its sluggish pace, *Iron Soldier* is great fun – even running out of ammo doesn't spoil the game as you can simply revert to using your metallic feet and fists to continue the devastation. Featuring some great gameplay and polished visuals, *Iron Soldier* and its CD-ROM-based sequel are well worth checking out.

Protector SE

Publisher: Songbird Productions
Year: 2002

Forget about Atari's remake of *Defender* – this is the title you should be playing if you're a real adrenaline junkie. Proving that there's still plenty of life in the Jaguar even after its early demise, *Protector SE* is a great *Defender* clone and one of the most enjoyable games on Atari's ill-fated console. It has incredibly tight controls, some gorgeous visuals and massive, meaty sound effects, making it a blaster's dream. Add some fantastic gameplay, plenty of great power-ups and a beautiful difficulty curve and you've got one hell of a game.





DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS: TOWER OF DOOM (Arcade) Capcom, 1993 – Original arcade flyer



Rising Sun Retro

YOUNG GIRLS, ANTAGONISTIC FISH AND A HELL OF A LOT OF ELASTIC – IT COULD ONLY BE A JAPANESE GAME…

U•M•I•H•A•R•A K•A•W•A•S•E

Release: 1994
Format: SNES
Publisher: TNN
Developer: In-House

With Sonic the Hedgehog and a certain Italian plumber proving extremely popular, Nineties developers insisted on jumping on the platform bandwagon. While many titles were predictable carbon copies that displayed none of the imagination or creativity of the games that inspired them, a few managed to define their own niche in what was becoming a saturated market. TNN's *Umihara Kawase* was one such game.

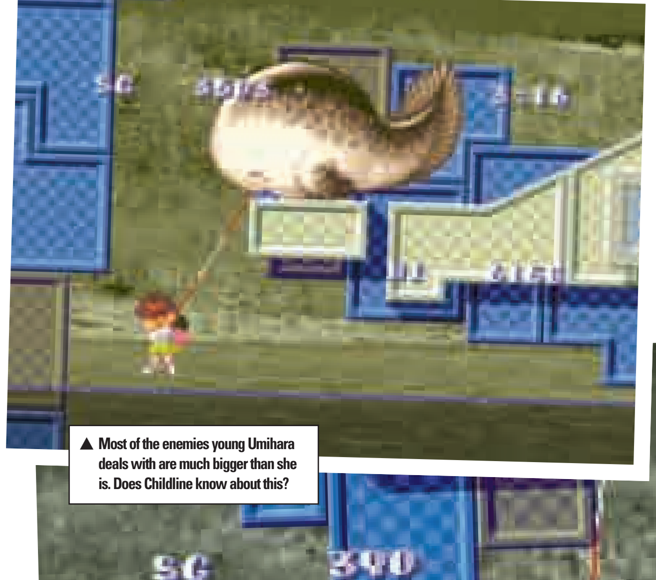
Those expecting a traditional platformer will get a shock, as *Umihara* contains a surprising amount of puzzle elements – and is all the better for it. Taking on the role young girl Umihara Kawase, you must travel through a variety of abstract levels while avoiding a range of sea life. Unfortunately, Umihara isn't too athletic and must rely on her elastic rope in order to negotiate each level. Fitted with a handy fish hook, the rope is a way to gain reach inaccessible platforms and also doubles as a weapon.

What makes *Umihara* really stand out though is the impressive physics that have been applied to the rubber rope. Hook a platform, walk in the opposite direction as fast as you can, then watch in amazement as near perfect physics send you hurtling back to your original position, only to slowly swing to a perfect stop once all the tension has left your rope.

While watching Umihara and her rope in motion is sheer poetry, you'll need skill and experimentation in order to achieve the best results. Fortunately, a demonstration at the start of each stage gives you a few hints for the level ahead, and you'll soon be swinging through *Umihara*'s elaborate stages like a girl possessed.

Even after you've learned the most rudimentary techniques there are still plenty of lovely touches that will make you thank your local importer for this eccentric but horribly addictive game. Hook a fish and pull it off an opposite platform and its bulk will cause Umihara to slide to the end of her own platform and take the full weight of the dangling seafood. Little touches like this are littered throughout the game and really let you appreciate how much thought has gone into this extraordinary title.

Of course, *Umihara* isn't without its faults, and frustration will prove to be the biggest killer. Rest assured, though, if you persevere you'll discover a game that's as deep as the many stretches of water that Umihara can fall into. It's typical that a game as unique and as enjoyable as *Umihara Kawase* never got a western release (neither did the two PlayStation sequels), but you really do need to track this little beauty down. You'll never look at a fishing rod in the same way again…



▲ Most of the enemies young Umihara deals with are much bigger than she is. Does Childline know about this?



KINGS OF THE SWINGERS

Umihara isn't the only videogame character to negotiate levels by swinging through them…

Bionic Commando
(*Bionic Commando*)
Having a telescopic arm is great, especially when it allows you to access previously out-of-reach areas.

Samus Aran
(*Super Metroid*)
Certain areas of Zebes consist of huge gaping chasms, but Samus can use her Grappling Beam to swing across them with ease

Simon Belmont
(*Super Castlevania IV*)
Parts of Dracula's castle need some handy whip skills in order to clear them. You've been warned…

G•A•U•N•T•L•E•T I•I

Great RETRO Gaming Moments

YOU'RE IT!

It was a Saturday afternoon, you had a pocket full of spare change and managed to convince your mates to join you down the local arcade. The reason? To participate in the follow-up to Atari's excellent *Gauntlet* and delve into a brand new set of dangerous dungeons.

One of the most obvious differences upon first playing was the new ability to choose from any of the four main characters. Finally, it was no longer necessary to jostle your mates in order to play the Valkyrie, as Atari's generosity had made it possible for four warrior maidens to participate at the same time (or any other combination that you wanted). Perhaps the most enjoyable change, though, came when you'd made your way to level three and encountered the It Monster for the very first time…



▼ Requests for a game of off-ground tig fell on deaf ears…

Upon reaching the initially empty level, your attention was quickly drawn to a bright flashing blob that was rapidly moving towards you. With the mysterious enemy impervious to your firepower and moving ever closer, panic quickly filled the group as you all tried to avoid the amorphous blob. Unfortunately, there was no escape and within moments you heard the ominous words: "Blue Valkyrie is now it…".

Almost immediately, monsters appeared and began to home in on the unlucky player. The only way to avoid the onslaught was to try to tag one of your fellow dungeon delvers and inflict them with the deadly curse instead. Needless to say, arguments followed, tempers got frayed and friendships were destroyed. Marvellous.

Year: 1986
Format: Arcade
Publisher: Atari
Developer: In-House

GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT

UGH!

Release: 1984
Format: Spectrum
Publisher: Softek Software International Ltd
Developers: Tony Samuels/ Stevie Beverly

Every now and then – well, perhaps more often than that – our minds will race back to our misspent youth and recall one of the many games we used to enjoy once school had finished for the day. Sometimes they prove as playable as ever and join the ranks of titles like *Knight Lore*, *Super Metroid* and this month's *Rainbow Islands*. Other times, a quick play will reveal that the rose-tinted specs have been working overtime – *Ugh!* is one such game.

Despite not receiving amazing scores when it was first released, there was something endearing about *Ugh!* and we had fond memories of the little Caveman who had to traverse a maze-like path in order to collect dinosaur eggs for his tea. *Ugh!* had already been a popular title for the Dragon and C64, but never really achieved the same status on the Spectrum (no doubt because of so many similar titles). Nevertheless, guiding your Caveman around the screen and avoiding the ferocious Tyrannosaurus Rex and rock-dropping Pterodactyl made for some enjoyable (though fairly repetitive) gaming and it was a diverting time-waster.



▲ There was a time when cavemen excited us, but now they just don't seem to do it for us. How times change…

Nowadays, playing *Ugh!* is a somewhat painful experience. Changing direction is extremely cumbersome and the collision detection is much more noticeable and leaves a lot to be desired. The game's charm is still there, but only the most avid *Ugh!* fans will be able to glean any lasting enjoyment from it. Load it up by all means, but you may well be surprised with what you get…





Format: Arcade
Release: 1987
Publisher: Taito
Developer: In-House

THE STORY OF BUBBLE BOBBLE 2

We travel somewhere over the rainbow to revisit one of the greatest platform games ever made



▼ Get hit by a cute critter thing and Bub will disappear off the bottom of the screen, crying all the way.

▼ Don't be fooled by their sweet smiles and jaunty outfits – many of the bosses are absolute sods to kill.

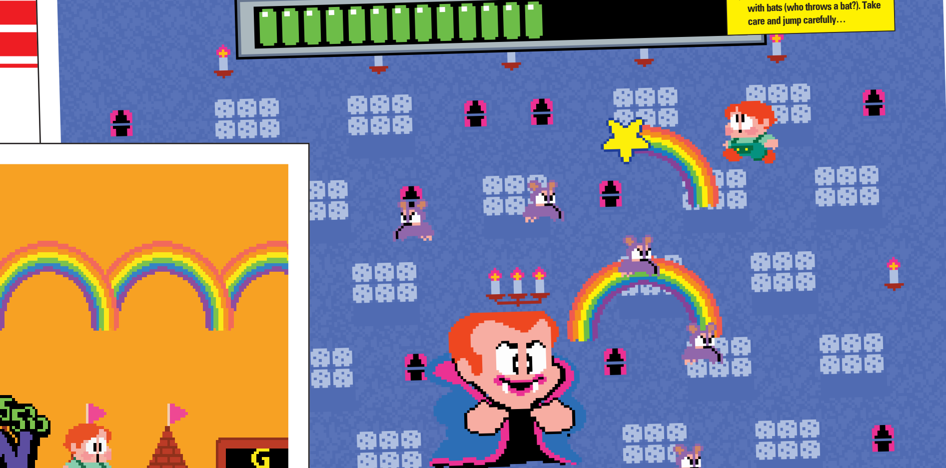
After the success of Taito's excellent *Bubble Bobble* in 1986, it was inevitable that its bubble-blowing heroes, brothers Bub and Bob, would appear in arcades again. Fortunately, gamers didn't have long to wait, and they soon found themselves immersed in one of the most fiendishly addictive platformers ever created. Taito had dropped the two-player mode that had made *Bubble Bobble* so addictive, and taken away the first game's confined play area and replaced it with a vertically scrolling level that was many screens high. The brothers had also lost the ability to fire their potent bubbles. Oh, and did we mention that Bub and Bob were no longer dinosaurs…?

The happy-go-lucky brothers had regained their human forms and now had the ability to fire Rainbows at their opponents. Each Rainbow stayed in place for a limited amount of time and could be used as a platform to reach higher levels. As the later stages became more complex it was often necessary to continually create Rainbows before you found yourself back on solid ground. Unfortunately, the game's brightly coloured islands were slowly sinking into the sea, hence your need to reach the top of each stage as quickly as possible. Linger too long and water would appear at the bottom of the screen and keep rising – and even the slightest brush with the sea would result in instant death.

Considering its relative simplicity – reach the top of each stage within a certain time – there was a huge amount of depth in Taito's classic, and extended play revealed all manner of interesting gameplay mechanics. Destroying an enemy with the top of a Rainbow would result in the critter spinning through the air before falling to the ground as one of 80 different items of food. Every third item was a special power-

EXTRA, EXTRA!

The biggest advantage of 1988's sort-of remake, *Rainbow Islands Extra*, was that it allowed players to finally see the previously unlockable secret islands without having to collect the Diamonds. Starting off with Darius Island, you were immediately struck by how the level's colour scheme and enemies changed the tone of the game. This was most apparent when you reached the fourth stage and fought a laser-toting spacecraft as opposed to the first game's cute spider. The original islands had had a facelift too and sported completely different sprites to *Rainbow Islands*, although many of their attack patterns were identical to the first version. Still, it was a nice touch and was a clever move by Taito to extend the life of an already great game.



▼ This evil little vampire bombards you with bats (who throws a bat?). Take care and jump carefully…

▼ Once you've reached the end of a stage there'll be a treasure trove of goodies to enjoy – which is only fair after all the hard work you've put in…

up that ranged from speed boosts to the ability to fire multiple Rainbows.

Carefully trapping an enemy with your Rainbow, or hitting it with the underside, would turn the creature into one of seven coloured diamonds. Collecting all seven jewels would result in a huge diamond appearing after defeating each level's sugary sweet boss. If you were able to collect each island's diamond, three secret levels would appear that were based on previous Taito games. Magical Island featured enemies from *Fairyland Story*, Darius Island contained all sorts of mechanical spacecraft, while Bubble Island was based on the original game. It was only by successfully completing these bonus stages (collecting all seven diamonds also rewarded you with a magical mirror) that you could get *Rainbow Islands*' true ending. Add the ability to link your Rainbows and then destroy them in a huge chain and the possibilities to create massive scores became endless.

Those weren't all *Rainbow Islands*' secrets, though… Collect the diamonds in order – Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet – and a secret door would appear when you got to the Island's boss. Behind the door lay not only the Island's big diamond, but also permanent access to one of the game's power-ups. You were also given a code that, when entered at the start of each new game, allowed you to continue with everything you had previously unlocked.

The beauty of *Rainbow Islands* was that it was as simple or as complex as you wanted it to be. Novice gamers were more than happy bouncing on Rainbows and fighting the cute bosses, while more hardcore players would use every trick at their disposal to amass huge amounts of points.

With such universal appeal the rights to *Rainbow Islands* were snapped up by British Telecomsoft's Firebird label and Graftgold was hired to work on the home conversions. Unfortunately for Graftgold, British Telecomsoft announced it was selling its entertainment software division and the ongoing contract negotiations between Telecomsoft and Microprose meant that Firebird's contract with Taito eventually expired. This left Graftgold with one of the finest arcade conversions ever made and no way to publish it. Fortunately, Ocean snatched the licence from under the nose of Microprose, and *Rainbow Islands* went on to receive critical acclaim and was a huge success too.

Although Bub and Bob appeared in three later games – *Parasol Stars*, *Bubble Symphony* and *Bubble Memories* – they never lived up to the cult status they created with their first two outings. Still, when you have a game that's as playable today as it was 17 years ago, it's perhaps unsurprising that Taito never managed to reach the same heights.

SO NEAR, YET SO FAR

Although the various 8- and 16-bit conversions of *Rainbow Islands* were all very faithful (especially the Spectrum and Atari ST iterations), various limitations on each machine meant that they were never going to be arcade perfect. The biggest omission was the fact that none of the secret islands had been included, although one appeared on the later PC version. For the full *Rainbow Islands* experience, you'll need to pick up either the PC Engine CD or Mega Drive games, which were both only released in Japan and are now very expensive. While the Mega Drive version is very, very good, it's pipped to the post by the superior PC Engine game. Both *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands* eventually appeared on the Saturn and PlayStation. Although graphically identical to the original arcade game, the licence to 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow' had long since expired, meaning as good as the game looked and played, it just didn't feel right. Of course, you could always buy the original PCB board, but don't expect to have much change left from £200…

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF 1987

FASHION VICTIM: Cycling shorts made their skin-tight sartorial debut in 1987 and were even more revealing than the Seventies' hotpants. Funnily enough, they looked better on women…

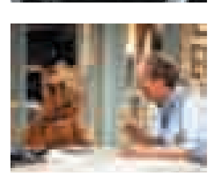


AT THE MOVIES: Providing you were old enough to see it (or you watched one of the many pirated versions) Paul Verhoeven's *Robocop* proved essential viewing.



CARTOON HEROES: The idea of a space-age Native American marshal with a gun-toting, talking horse may have sounded strange, but *Bravestarr* proved to be extremely popular.

ON THE RADIO: A-Ha, everyone's favourite Norwegian pop group, released 'The Living Daylights' to tie in with the James Bond movie of the same name. Needless to say, it was pants.



ON THE BOX: That lovable alien life form Alf made his first TV appearance and immediately became a hit. Copycat titles like *Bigfoot And The Hendersons* never achieved the same success.



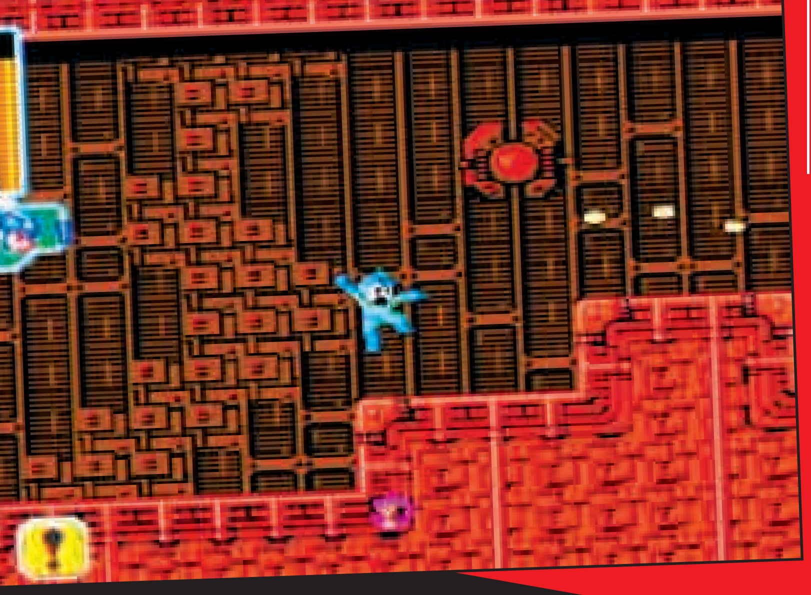
MEGA MAN ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

The hardest working hero in gaming has finally earned a decent retrospective

FORMAT: GameCube/PS2
PRICE: Around £20 from importers
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: Atomic Power

If you were a NES owner, chances are that you'll already be familiar with Capcom's blue-suited hero, Mega Man. First appearing on the NES in 1987, *Mega Man* immediately set a new standard in platform games by allowing you to tackle levels in whichever way you wanted, instead of having to slug along the usual preset path. Another nice touch was that after you had defeated a stage's boss, you were then able to gain control of his weapon and use it against future foes. As the series progressed, Mega Man acquired new moves and also started to branch out into other genres, until he eventually ended up appearing in over 50 titles (although, admittedly, many of these were as cameos).

In light of such a distinguished career, Capcom has finally decided to give Mega Man's fans a long overdue collection of his first eight outings. For just over 20 English pounds you'll get your hands on six NES titles, one SNES title, *Mega Man 7* and, of course, *Mega Man 8*, which appeared on the PlayStation and Saturn. It's not a bad package by any means and considering Nintendo has recently been re-releasing single NES titles for the Game Boy Advance for a similar price, it seems like even more of a bargain. Add to this a generous selection of extras, including two bonus arcade games – *Mega Man: The Power Battle* and *Mega Man: The Power Fighters* – and it's obvious that Atomic Power has put a lot of time and thought into this well-crafted disc.

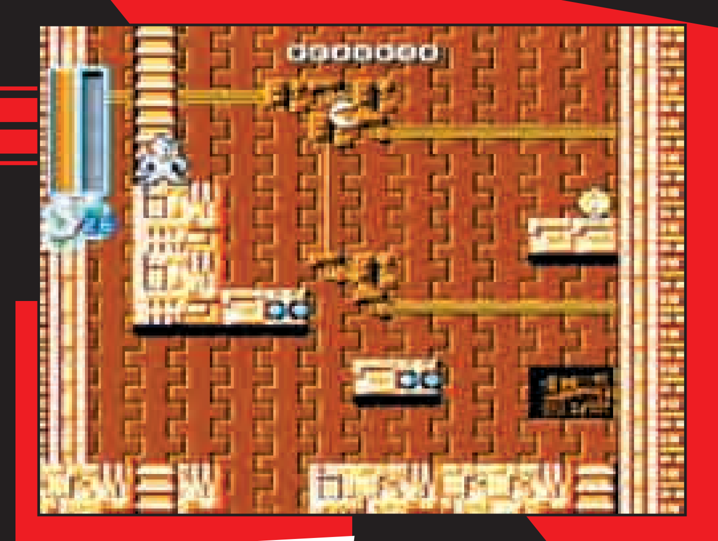


▼ Mega Man deserves a place in your game collection for long service alone…

NAVI MODE

In order to add some uniformity to the earlier NES titles (as well as making them a little easier) Atomic Power has added a handy Navi mode. All the games now use the same menu as *Mega Man 8* and you'll get little pointers about the best route to take through each stage. Purists can turn these off if they prefer, but it's still a nice touch and is well worth using if you've never played the original games. In fact, the only thing we're really upset about is the fact that the GameCube version lacks the remixed music of the PS2 title and has had the jump and shoot buttons switched around. Fortunately, the controls are easy to adjust to and within moments you'll be jumping around platforms and taking out bad guys like a seasoned pro.

What's more, Capcom has now made it possible to use the L and R buttons to cycle through Mega Man's different suits without having to use a menu, not to mention adding a handy rapid fire option. These small touches have dramatically improved the original titles without compromising on the all-important gameplay. Throw in some cleaned-up sprites (all the colour clashing and flicker has been removed) and you're left with the best NES incarnations you could hope for. But will all that be enough to convince people that Mega Man is as good as his fans say…?



MEGA MAN

FORMAT: NES
YEAR: 1987

One of the first things you'll notice about Mega Man's NES debut is just how bloody hard it is. In the heyday of the NES, disappearing platforms, re-spawning enemies and pixel-perfect timing were the (alleged) hallmarks of good platform design and *Mega Man* has all these in spades. Battle your way to a boss and it's quite likely that lives will be lost as you get used to his varied attack patterns. Things improve once you've defeated your first opponent and as you get into the *Mega Man* mindset, the game really picks up. It's not the best *Mega Man* game, but it stood way above many of its peers. Add some tidy visuals, a few memorable tunes and some well-designed bosses and this compilation is off to a decent (though not perfect) start.

SCORE 7/10

MEGA MAN II

FORMAT: NES
YEAR: 1988

For many, this is where Mega Man really upped his game and Capcom's sequel set a blueprint for many of the later titles. The game's less intimidating difficulty level made it a favourite with fans, as many were actually able to finish it. Playing it again reveals the controls to be a lot tighter than the previous game, although Mega Man still has an annoying tendency to slide around. Aesthetically, everything has been slightly improved and there's now a lot more detail in the backgrounds. While the spot effects are rather uninspired, the music has improved and features plenty of hummable tunes. The option of using a password save is extremely handy (though this is rendered pointless by the Cube's auto save) and the inclusion of E-Tanks increases longevity.

SCORE 8/10



MEGA MAN III

FORMAT: NES
YEAR: 1990

Not content with an already enjoyable formula, Capcom continued to add improvements to what is, for many, the best NES title in the series. Mega Man is now able to slide by holding 'down' and pressing the jump button, and has been joined by his faithful canine sidekick, Rush. This robotic wonder dog has a handy spring ability (useful for getting to out-of-reach platforms), can transform into an aquatic craft and even turn into a rather nifty jet. Unsurprisingly, *Mega Man III*'s level design makes great use of these new abilities and we've really enjoyed exploring the vast levels and facing off against some enormous (now flicker-free) sprites. The controls have also improved dramatically and the single-colour backdrops of the earlier games are becoming extremely rare. With continually evolving graphics and music, some truly great bosses and plenty of replay value, *Mega Man III* is easily our favourite game on the compilation.

SCORE 9/10

MEGA MAN IV

FORMAT: NES
YEAR: 1991

The most important addition to *Mega Man IV* is the Mega Buster, a great weapon that allows you to charge up energy before unleashing it in a devastating blast. We found that the difficulty has once again returned for this instalment, so you may want to tackle this on Easy mode before you attempt it on Normal. Strangely, *Mega Man IV* isn't as enjoyable as the rest of the series (although it's still a marked improvement over *Mega Man VI*) and you won't find yourself returning to it too often once it's finished. Although the visuals feature a lot of variety in both sprites and backdrops, the music is rather disappointing and isn't a patch on the tunes in *II* or *III*. The bosses are still as enjoyable (and tough) as ever, but, for us, this doesn't have the same wow factor as *Mega Man III* and the lack of innovation is beginning to show. Good, but no classic.

SCORE 7/10

▼ Your robotic canine companion is handy for reaching those out-of-the-way spots.



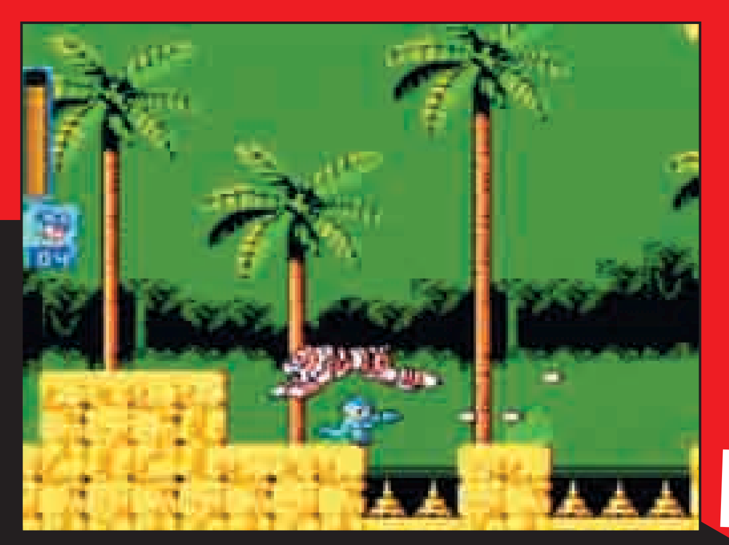


MEGA MAN V

FORMAT: NES
RELEASE: 1992

As you continue to play through this great little disc, you really start to appreciate just how much attention has been paid to Mega Man's back story. The story for the fifth instalment, for example, is particularly compelling and involves a fairly complicated plot (for an 8-bit platformer) about a clone of Mega Man's brother, Proto Man. One of the first things that strikes you about this particular instalment is how impressive the visuals look on the humble NES. There's a fair amount of lovely parallax scrolling and the detail and variation in the many different enemies continues to impress. We're not too happy about the tunes that play throughout the game, but they're a marked improvement over what we heard in *Mega Man IV* and don't irritate too much. Luckily, the gameplay and level design is as strong as ever and your control of Mega Man is second to none.

SCORE 8/10

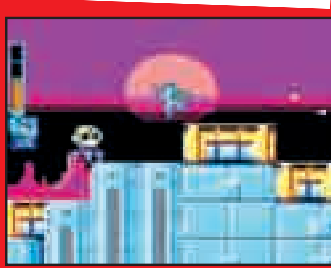


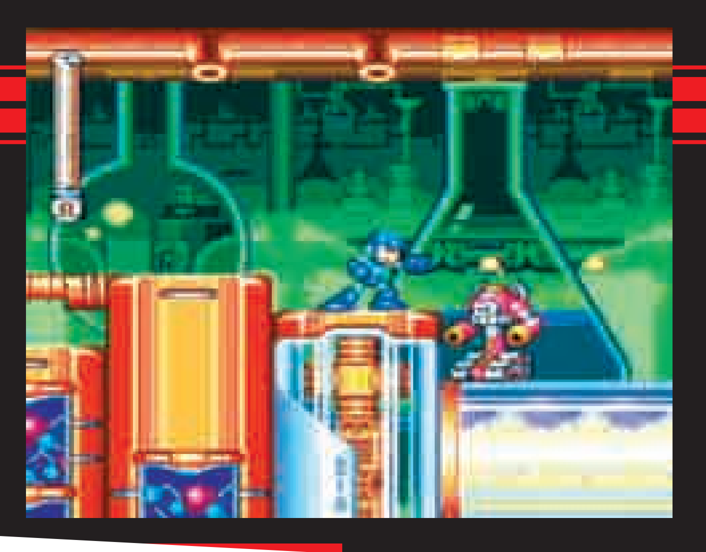
MEGA MAN VI

FORMAT: NES
RELEASE: 1993

Returning to *Mega Man VI* confirms everything you remember from the first time you played it. For all its technical achievements (this was easily the best looking NES title) it feels really unfinished. The reality is that it was licensed exclusively by Nintendo and was one of the last games to appear on the fading NES. This has easily the worst music of all the games here and it made us wish the GameCube had the same remixed tunes that are on the PS2 disc. We've no problem with the way the game plays, but once again the difficulty has been ramped up to insane levels, and after the joy of *II* and *III* it's a real effort to adjust to the difficulty curve again. What's most obvious about playing through this again though is that Mega Man had reached his potential on the NES and the gameplay suffers because of it.

SCORE 6/10





MEGA MAN VII

FORMAT: SNES
RELEASE: 1995

Now this is more like it. After a two-year break, Mega Man returned in a brand new adventure that felt (and still feels) much fresher than his last two outings. Rush has a new ability – Rush Search – and robotic bird Beat can rescue Mega Man from a mistimed jump. Capcom had already made two *Mega Man X* titles for the SNES and the graphical knowledge used in those games paid dividends in *Mega Man VII*. Gorgeously over-the-top bosses, some fantastic looking levels and plenty of vibrant colours ensured that this was miles ahead of the NES titles – even the music had received a significant upgrade. As a result, *Mega Man VII* will be a lot more accessible to today's gamers and we certainly had a lot of fun with it. Controls are incredibly tight and responsive (although the larger sprites now leave you with little room to manoeuvre) and Rush and Beat's new abilities come in very handy. Unfortunately, the Mega Buster is a lot weaker so you'll hardly ever use it. In the original SNES version there was a cool little *Street Fighter* homage locked away that was limited but fairly enjoyable to play – sadly, we can't currently find it on the compilation. The seventh title is a fine return to form and easily one of the disc's highlights.

SCORE 8/10

MEGA MAN VIII

FORMAT: PSONE/SATURN
YEAR: 1996

The newest console title on the compilation features greatly improved sound and visuals (including some rather funky FMV) and lots of new gameplay features. For some reason, though, we're not really that impressed with it. It's a lot easier than previous titles (although not as simple as *Mega Man II*) and allowing Mega Man to swim is a nice bonus, but many of the enhancements we've encountered don't really add much to the already proven gameplay. Fortunately, the game's bosses are still as great as ever and their attack patterns are even more adventurous than in previous titles. The inclusion of speech is also a neat addition (especially when the bosses start mocking you) but this is really just Mega Man by numbers and doesn't offer much over the earlier games. It's all very well having great animation, beautiful visuals and some funky tunes, but we were expecting a lot more than what the 32-bit power of the new consoles suggested.

SCORE 7/10

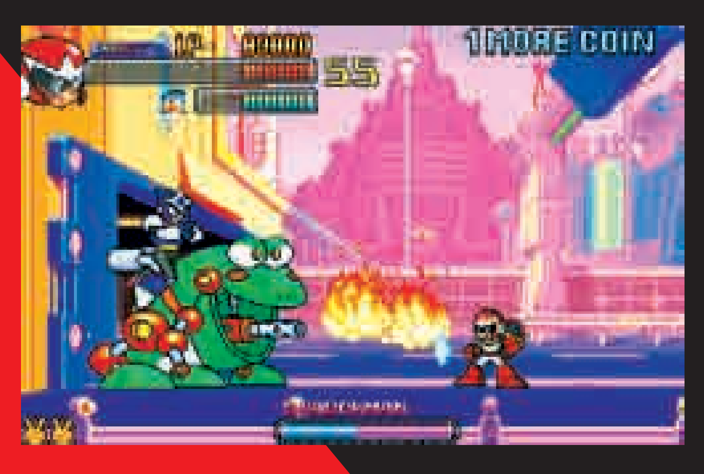


MEGA MAN: THE POWER BATTLES

FORMAT: ARCADE
YEAR: 1995

Atomic Power made the right decision to hide the two Mega Man beat-'em-ups as they're definitely the weakest link on this compilation. *Power Battles* does feature some beautiful backdrops and superb animation, but there's very little depth to the fighting (although teaming up against the boss robots is good fun). *Power Battles* is basically a one-on-one against various bosses from the first seven Mega Man games. Rather than use elaborate button configurations, this is very straightforward and has little depth. It's a nice touch that you can gain control of a defeated boss's weapon, and the two-player game can be quite a bit of fun, but its arcade roots are obvious. It's definitely worth checking out, but *Power Battles* is something you won't really revisit once it's finished.

SCORE 6/10

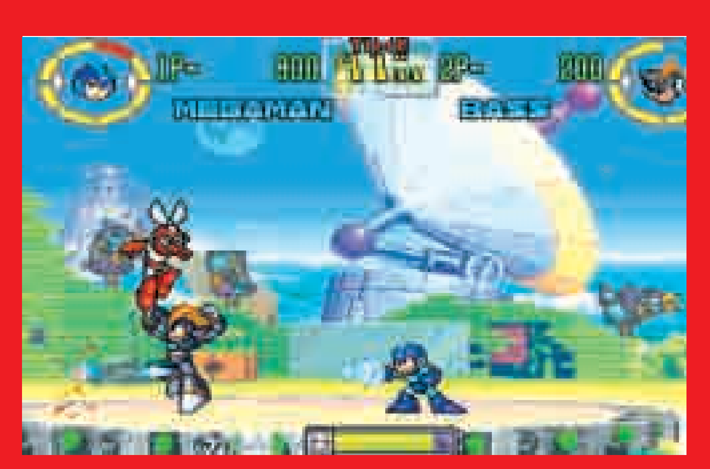


MEGA MAN II: THE POWER FIGHTERS

FORMAT: ARCADE
YEAR: 1996

Although the original *Power Fighters* never made it outside of Japan, Atomic Power has kindly included it here as the second unlockable game. It's still a far cry from Capcom's classic fighters, but this is a marked improvement over *Power Battles* and features better visuals, some great tunes and three separate missions. Though the missions are rather simple affairs, they add some much-needed variety to the game and provide the longevity that was missing from the first title. Sadly, a few of the first game's bosses have appeared (there are more than enough different characters Capcom could have used) though a few basic special moves have also been added. *Power Fighters* looks even better than the original game and the enhancements to the gameplay mean this is well worth trying to unlock. And no, we won't tell you how to find it…

SCORE 8/10





MORE MEGA MAN ADVENTURES ON THE WAY

Fans of the original Game Boy Mega Man games will be pleased to learn that they'll all be included on an upcoming compilation for the Game Boy Advance. The *Mega Man Anniversary Collection* is available now from any good importer and includes five great titles. Expect coverage in a future issue…

OVERALL SCORE:

7 + 8 + 9 + 7 + 8 + 6 + 8 + 7 + 6 + 8 = 74/100

The majority of the games may have already been released on the PlayStation (albeit only in Japan), but this is still a great retro package and deserves a purchase. The only thing that's left to decide is whether you want the remixed music and cartoon that the PlayStation2 offers, or if you're quite happy with the GameCube's bonus interviews. Whichever disc you end up getting, though, you're not going to be disappointed. Let's hope this is the first of many similar packages.



Retro Contact

Share your views about old-school gaming

First Contact
If you're into retro gaming and you've got something to share with the world, why not write to us at: games™ Retro, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS Or you can email: gamestm@paragon.co.uk

KILLER THRILLER

Dear games™
After reading your piece on *Killer Instinct* back in issue 15, I was immediately awash with nostalgia and would have done anything to get my mitts on a copy of the game. Despite searching car boot sales and local stores, I just couldn't find a copy anywhere and eventually gave up.

Just recently, though, my luck changed for the better. Not only did I find a 50p-robbing *Killer Instinct 2* machine lurking at the back of my local arcade, but while at a local market I stumbled across a boxed copy of the original for the SNES! Obviously I was very pleased with myself, but the best was yet to come. On looking inside the box I found a copy of *Killer Cuts*, the CD that was given away free with the game when it was first released. Funny how you always find things when you're not looking for them, eh?

Anyway, thanks for covering this great game and keep up the good work. Without you guys, I wouldn't be racking up 96-move combos right now.
Ian Murphy

Congratulations on your finds, Ian – you really are one jammy chap.

VISIONARY

Dear games™
Thank you, thank you for the great feature on the Mattel Intellivision console.

I'm the proud owner of a couple of these consoles plus an Intellivoice module, along with a largish library of carts. I remember selling these consoles many years ago when I worked at the now long defunct Rumbelows chain and we all thought that they were the best thing since sliced bread.

By the way, am I the only 42-year-old still collecting aged consoles?
Richard B

■ Glad you liked the feature, Richard, and don't worry – retro collecting isn't the preserve of any particular age group. It's not like you're out there riding a BMX with your trousers hanging off your backside… is it?



Too old for retro consoles? You're never too old. Spend your kids' inheritance on carts. That'll teach them…

WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN

Dear games™
I have to admit I've been a bit of a non-believer on the retro front for a while, but have recently skimmed over the retro pages in the mag for the first time – how wrong could I have been?

I've just blown the dust and cobwebs off my old 128K+2 Speccy and have discovered a wealth of gaming that I had completely forgotten about. Games like *Slightly Magic* and *Impossamole* just aren't made any more and I was surprised at how much I enjoyed playing through them again.

Anyway, I'm now well and truly converted to the retro way of thinking and I'm going to start building my collection as soon as possible. Any tips on what machines I should start off with would be greatly appreciated.
Mark

If you're looking to build up a collection, why not start with the Mega Drive, C64 or SNES? Games can be picked up for next to nothing (unless you're looking for specific Japanese and RPG titles) and a lot of the games are still great to play. If money isn't a problem, why not consider the Neo Geo AES, PC Engine or a Vectrex? That should start eating into your bank balance…

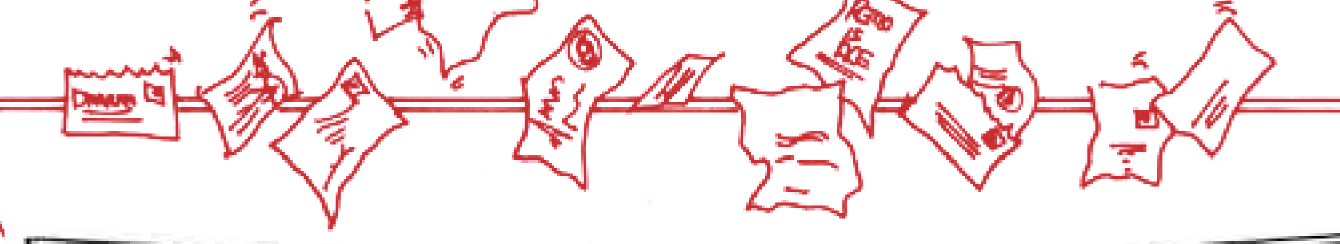


EXPENSIVE BARGAIN

Dear games™
Why, oh why, did you showcase *Shinrei Jusatsushi Taromaru*? You are costing me an absolute fortune! After reading the article I picked up a perfect, complete example of the game from France for £165, which I think you'll agree is a good price.

Oh, and before I forget, what is it about *EastEnders* at the moment? Not so long ago one of the characters was playing on a PlayStation2 and the perfect sound of Midway's *Space Invaders* could be heard, along with the mothership and the obvious noise of your base being destroyed – very nostalgic. The player ranted and pushed his joypad to one side, moaning about being beaten again and explainign that he couldn't find his way past the animals to get to the other side! I think someone in the BBC sound effects department was having a laugh, don't you?
Neil Riley

Sorry we're costing you a fortune, Neil, but if it's any consolation, this month's Rising Sun Retro title can be picked up for around £40. We were also intrigued by the *EastEnders* incident, but continuity with videogames has never been





STAR LETTER

MY HEAD IS SPINNING

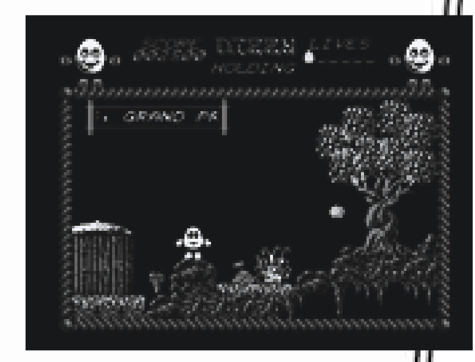
Dear games™

Where's Dizzy? Many issues ago it was mentioned that he would be making a comeback and I've been waiting and gazing lovingly at my Yolk Folk collection ever since.

I was a huge fan of the Dizzy series and owned every single game that starred the courageous little egg. The amount of time that I put into *Spellbound Dizzy* was incredible and I still rate it as one of the most difficult and enjoyable games I've ever played. Have the plans for the comeback been canned or is it just a case of being a little more patient?

Melissa Jakes

Although footage of a 3D Dizzy appeared last year, it was only to see how he might look in a 3D game. Your best bet is to be patient, as the yolky hero is bound to turn up again at some point – let's face it, most beloved (and not so beloved) retro titles are getting revamps now. To be honest, though, we'd much rather see him in a new 2D platformer for the GBA. In the meantime, treat yourself to a T-shirt – that should help make the wait less painful.



A three-dimensional Dizzy? If it's all the same to you, we'd rather see him the way nature intended – in 2D.

one of its strong points. You can often see a pink GBA that's been in numerous episodes (including one set in Spain) and seems to belong to different people; can't they all afford one each?

I'LL TAKE YOU ALL!

Dear games™

I've just been reading issue 22 and the feature on Richard Morgan's games collection. Pah! Okay, so he had some hardware (didn't see a coin-op) but there were about four games in his collection! I've sent you a couple of crude photos using my webcam of part of my Mega Drive collection (which is over 170 boxed games) and my coin-op – although it's not on, it has *New Zealand* story inside.

I also have a Saturn with over 40 games, a Dreamcast with about the same amount and SNES, GameCube, Xbox, PAL PS2, NTSC/J PS2 (that's two different consoles, not a mod chip!) plus other stuff. Give me a mail if you want some real pictures.

Simon Stallwood

Well, Simon, due to a lack of space we were unable to show Richard's impressive collection in its entirety – if we did, there would have been no retro section left. Suffice to say, he has a lot more than just four games. To be honest, you sound like you're spoiling for a challenge, so why not send full details of your collection (plus high-res pictures, of course) to the usual address?

BIZARRE COINCIDENCE

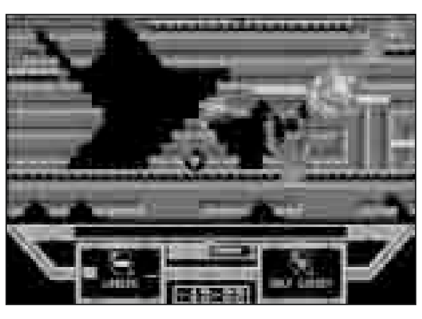
Dear games™

This is just a quick email thanking you for displaying the full-page screenshot of *Killing Game Show* in this month's issue (**games™** 21)! It was many moons ago that I created that game, and it brought a smile to my face to see it in all its glory in the magazine.

Indeed, we only recently celebrated our tenth anniversary here at Bizarre, and to mark the occasion we had an 'open day' for all the friends and families of the chaps that work here. As part of the event we had running copies of all of our games, going all the way back to pre-Bizarre 1987, including *KGS*, which was great to see. Seeing your screenshot made me wish that we'd produced shots of all of our games for that day. Anyway, thanks again, and keep up the great work with the mag.

Martyn Chudley, MD, Bizarre Creations

It's good to hear that people are continuing to enjoy the Retro images. If you want us to frame one for you, Martyn, you've only got to ask…,



If only we'd thought it through we could have offered souvenir editions of our retro screenshots. Maybe even laminated ones. There's fancy.



Retro Contact is sponsored by Joystick Junkies. Each month's Star Letter will win its author an item of retro gaming clothing of their choice worth up to £20.



CLASSIC CONSOLE

BUYERS GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

BUYERS GUIDE

It might be easy to play retro games through emulation, but there's nothing quite like owning the original system – that musty smell of ancient electronics can never really be replicated with a PC. Of course, there's always a price to pay and unscrupulous dealers are out to make a quick buck, but you really don't have to pay through the nose if you look in the right places. Charity shops, car boot sales and eBay are all good places to start, but before you do, use our guide to see how much you should be paying…

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£15
Atari Jaguar	£20-30

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£20-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£115-220
PC Engine GT	£100-200
Super Grafx	£200-300

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£10-25
Mega CD	£40-60
Sega 32X	£30
Sega Nomad	£75-150
Sega Saturn	£20-35
Dreamcast	£20-40

SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo Geo CD	£125-175
Neo Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo Geo Pocket Color	£30-50

MACHINE OF THE MONTH



- **NAME:** Jaguar
- **PRICE:** £35-60 with games
- **THREE OF THE BEST:**
  Alien Vs Predator (est price £60)
  Tempest 2000 (est price £40)
  Iron Soldier (est price £35)
- Some say you can count the decent Jaguar games on one hand, but we reckon that's unfair… you need two. The bargains are there if you look.

HOW TO USE GAMES TRADING MARKET

SELLING

Simply send the following to: gtm@paragon.co.uk
■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18) ■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The item(s) you wish to sell (no more than five per month) ■ The condition of the item(s) ■ How much you want for the item(s)
Each item will be listed along with your region.

BUYING

Mail the following details to: gtm@paragon.co.uk
■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18) ■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The reference number for the item you want. Your email address will be passed to the seller, who will contact you to close the deal and arrange payment and delivery. This runs on a first come, first served basis.

WANTED

Contact us in the same way as above stating what items you want and any preferences on condition or price.

GTM RULES AND SMALL PRINT

This service is for private sellers, not dealers. Retro items only (nothing post-Dreamcast). No Mega Drive *FIFA* games – everyone has at least two. Highbury Entertainment cannot accept responsibility for items lost or broken in the post.

BUY & SELL your retro games with games™

GAMES TRADING MARKET

Searching for an elusive copy of Radiant Silvergun? Want to sell that pile of Spectrum games taking up space around the house? Then check out GTM, the most authentic retro sales column in the world.

FOR SALE

LOT 89 – Amiga 500 with 20 games including *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, *Stunt Car Racer*, *Zool* and *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. Comes with all relevant leads. Perfect for a beginner. £120. Southampton.

LOT 90 – Neo-Geo AES with two joysticks, a memory card and 11 games including *SNK Vs Capcom Chaos*, *Metal Slug 3* and *4*, *Fatal Fury Special* and *Alpha Mission* (games are English and Japanese, email for details). £1,000 ONO (will consider splitting). Shane at shamus1roks@yahoo.co.uk

LOT 92 – Chipped Japanese Dreamcast in clear case, with Japanese version of *Crazy Taxi*, *Psyvariar 2*, *House Of The Dead 2*, *Capcom Vs SNK*, *Cosmic Smash*, *Ikaruga*, *Powerstone*, *Street Fighter 3rd Strike* and *Giga Wing*. £180.

LOT 93 – Games: *Daytona USA* (Saturn, PAL), excellent condition, £2. *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* (Amiga, PAL), good condition, £1.50. *Zero Wing* (Mega Drive, PAL), good condition, £7. *Golden Axe 3* (Mega Drive, NTSC), excellent condition, £27. *Soukyugurentai* (Saturn, black cover, NTSC), excellent condition, £28. garethcrowley@hotmail.com

LOT 94 – *Faselei!* for Neo Geo Pocket (US version). Good condition, with instructions and clam shell. £40 (ONO) inc. P+P.

LOT 96 – Sega Nomad with three games: *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Streets Of Rage* and *Golden Axe*. Only plays Genesis titles, but can play Japanese and UK games with a converter. Screen has several marks on it, but good condition overall. £190. Southampton.

LOT 98 – PAL SNES with eight games including *Mario World*, *Uni Rally*, *Super Castlevania* and *Flashback*. All unboxed but in very good condition. £90. Aberdeen.

LOT 99 – *Harvest Moon 64* for N64. American version and in mint condition. £55. New Milton.

LOT 101 – PC Engine GT with eight games including *OutRun*, *Adventure Island*, *Gunhed* and *Jackie Chan Adventures*. Machine unboxed but in good condition. £200.

LOT 102 – *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* for Master System. Great condition and with instructions. £12.

LOT 103 – Sega Game Gear with six games including *Shinobi*, *Micro Machines*, *Mortal Kombat* and *Sonic 2*. Also has Master System converter and wide lens for a bigger picture. Has its own case. £35.

LOT 104 – *Jet Set Willy* for the Spectrum. Good condition. £3.50

LOT 105 – *Mario Allstars* for PAL SNES. Boxed in great condition. £25.

FOR SALE – LOT 106
SEGA SATURN
With 18 games including *Virtua Cop 1* and *2*, *Panzer Dragoon 2* and *Sega Rally*. Two lightguns and a second joypad. All boxed. £60.

Best Buy

WANTED

WANTED 35 – *King Of Fighters 2001* or *2002* for Neo Geo AES, boxed with manual. Good price paid. Derbyshire.

WANTED 36 – C64 and any games published by either Hewson or 21st Century Entertainment. Manchester.

WANTED 41 – Sega 32X. Must be in good working order. Will pay up to £40. Cambridgeshire.

WANTED 46 – *Metal Slug* for Neo-Geo AES. Will pay reasonable price if in good condition. Essex.

WANTED 47 – *Illbleed* for Sega Dreamcast. Any version, good price paid. Contact Andrew Hulme at ashulme1983@hotmail.com

WANTED 48 – *Bug* or *Bug Too* for Sega Saturn (PAL only) in working condition. Contact Mark at crazy-yak@think-yak.com

WANTED 49 - *Sonic 1*, *Sonic 2*, *Sonic 3* and *Sonic & Knuckles*. Would prefer boxes and manuals. Will pay £5 each. Contact iantennie@hotmail.com

WANTED 50 – Amiga with *Battle Chess*. Don't want to pay more than £100. paulnorrie@ntlworld.com.

WANTED 52 – *Jumping Flash 2* for PlayStation. Willing to pay up to £30, but must be in good condition. West Midlands.

WANTED 53 – *Super Probotector* for SNES, in mint condition and with instructions. Will collect if bought locally. Southampton.

WANTED 54 – Boxed copy of *Elemental Master* for the Sega Mega Drive, either Japanese or American. sambolland@yahoo.com

WANTED 55 – Atari ST joystick. Must be in reasonable condition.

GAMES™ RETRO CLASSIFIEDS

Send to: **GTM, games™, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS or email gtm@paragon.co.uk**

Name...

Address...

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....Postcode.................

Email...

Tick classified heading

❑ **FOR SALE** ❑ **WANTED**

Write your advertisement here, one word per box, and only include your name, address, phone number and/or email address below if you want them printed.

THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

EVERY MONTH, GAMES™ CHATS TO A COLLECTOR AND CONTEMPLATES STEALING THEIR COLLECTION WHEN THEIR BACK IS TURNED. THIS MONTH, WE MEET STEVEN COOPER AND DISCOVER HIS LOVE OF THE SPECTRUM AND SUPER NINTENDO

Q) How did your interest in collecting come about?
A) I've always been interested in games and from past experience, I soon realised I was losing a lot of money by selling off my old games.

Q) How long have you been collecting?
A) With the Spectrum I've been collecting for 20 years. I bought my Super Famicom back in 1992 and sadly sold some of the collection, but since 2001 (when I discovered eBay) I've once again started to build my collection back up.

Q) What's your most prized possession?
A) Its got to be *Bubbler* on the Spectrum. Not the best Ultimate game by any means, but probably the most collectable – plus the best thing about it is that I got it for free.

Q) What's the most desirable item that you haven't managed to track down yet?
A) At the moment there's nothing I want that I haven't found, although I am looking out for the Ultimate Collected Works on the Spectrum, a Microdrive Expansion kit (boxed) for the Spectrum and *Secret Of Mana* (US) for the Super Nintendo. All are available but I'm not going to spend silly money (again) on them.

Q) What's the most money you've spent on one item?
A) For hardware the most I spent was £170 on my first Super Famicom, but the most I've spent on software was £65 on an American copy of *Secret Of Mana*.

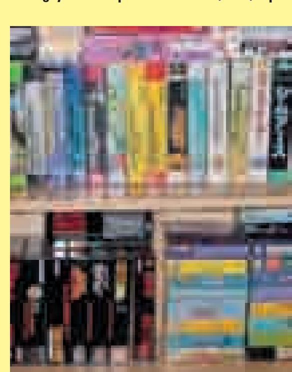
Q) What does your partner or family think of your collecting?
A) My wife doesn't have a problem with me collecting anything. The only problem we have is the room (or lack of!).

Q) What sources do you use and have you ever found a real bargain?
A) My main source is eBay although, sadly, there aren't too many bargains to be found at the moment. Car boots are useful for PAL stuff, and that's fine for my Spectrum collection. As for my real bargain, it was *Bubbler* for the Spectrum. The auction itself was for a boxed mint Spectrum and the Software Six Pack. After winning the auction I asked the seller if he had any Ultimate games for sale. He said he had one which he would include free of charge. Not bad at all for £25.

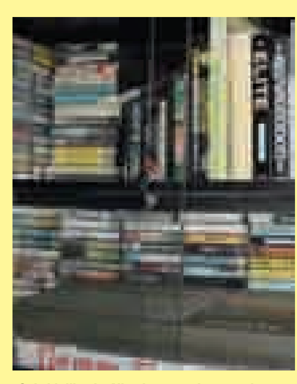
Q) Any regrets, or one that got away?
A) Selling things when I lost interest in gaming. Some of my Spectrum collection went a long time ago before I bought my house. Selling *Secret Of Mana* and *Legend Of Zelda* also brought a tear to my eye…



This guy thinks Super Famicoms are, well, super.



No NTSC *Secret Of Mana*? Tut tut…



Ooh, it's like the Nineties never happened.

NEXT MONTH IN RETRO



The fighters rise again in Midway's collection

In next month's Retro section we'll be reviewing Midway's second *Arcade Treasures* compilation, revisiting yet more classic games, and having a chat with David Braben – the man who brought us *Elite*…

See you then!

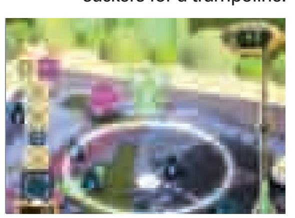
ON SALE 07 OCT


eMag

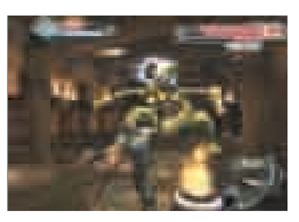
ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

VIEWPOINT
VIB RIPPLE
Are we the only people that saw the return of rhythm junkie Vibri as really enjoyable, rather than slightly disappointing? It would seem so, judging by the reactions we've seen elsewhere. But then maybe we're just suckers for a trampoline.



VIEWPOINT
PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY
Bravo, Midway, bravo. Thanks to your incredibly solid psychic shoot-'em-up adventure, you've got us obsessed with finding new and interesting ways to kill guards with our minds. Oh, and the game's really great too.



VIEWPOINT
FRONT MISSION 4
You've got to hand it to Square-Enix – it certainly knows how to make a great strategy game. Of course, if it wasn't so obsessed with breaking up each mission with annoyingly sterile cut-scenes where not much happens, we'd be even more pleased.



PLAYSTATION2

MANUFACTURER Sony **UK LAUNCH DATE** 24 November 2000 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £139.99



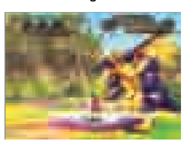
The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

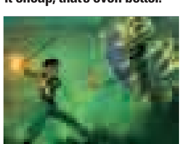
Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Amplitude	Sony	Harmonix	Music games have never needed as much skill as this
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 3: Takedown	EA Games	Criterion Studios	EA takes the arcade racing genre to new heights
Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	In-House	Realistic racing for the purist in all of us
Dark Chronicle	Sony	In-House	In-depth RPGs don't come much bigger than this
Devil May Cry	Capcom	In-House	The original is still the best by a long shot
Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness	Atlus	Nippon Ichi	Like your RPGs practically endless? Then this is for you
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The two games that pretty much put the PS2 where it is
Gregory Horror Show	Capcom	In-House	Bizarre, twisted and yet oh-so enjoyable
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a game
Ico	SCEE	In-House	Possibly the most beautiful game ever made
NBA Street 2	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The daddy of basketball games – no contest
Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubisoft	In-House	Ubisoft shows how to make a proper retro update
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House	If you only own one football game, it should be this
Project Zero	Wanadoo	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	In-House	An enjoyable and solid psychic blasting romp
Rez	Sega	UGA	Deceptively simple – draws you in before you know it
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
Suikoden III IMPORT	Konami	In-House	Konami's RPG series is still as good as it ever was
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

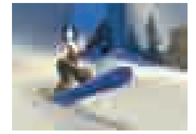
Dark Chronicle
The perfect way to lose all your free time. RPGs rarely come as sprawling or as absorbing as this.



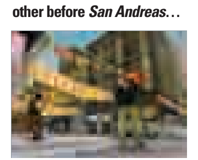
Beyond Good & Evil
A damn fine adventure, even if it did get ignored by many gamers. If you can find it cheap, that's even better.



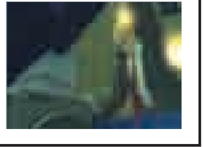
SSX 3
EA Sports BIG does it again – *SSX 3* is the one to go for if you're looking for high-octane snowboard fun.



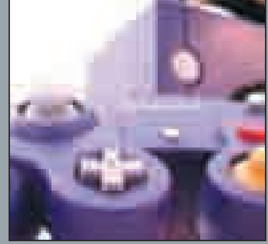
GTA: Double Pack
Last chance to get through the two games that sold more PS2s than any other before *San Andreas*…



Hitman: Contracts
The thinking man's slaughter-fest – ideal if you like to use your head before pulling the trigger.











XBOX

MANUFACTURER Microsoft **UK LAUNCH DATE** 13 March 2002 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £129.99



Despite a slow start, the Xbox has swiftly become one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to gamers than most PCs.

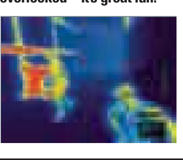
TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 3: Takedown	EA Games	Criterion Studios	The game that Xbox Live was made for – period.
Chronicles Of Riddick: Butcher Bay	Vivendi Universal	Starbreeze Studios	A fine example of great gameplay and top-notch graphics
Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos	Ion Storm	Freestyle adventuring with a decent first-person twist
Freedom Fighters	Electronic Arts	Io Interactive	Top-notch squad-based action with an arcade flavour
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The best versions of *GTA III* and *Vice City*, without a doubt
Halo	Microsoft	Bungie	The game that sold a million Xboxes
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a title
Jet Set Radio Future	Sega	Smilebit	Cel-shading at its very best and a soundtrack to die for
Knights Of The Old Republic	Activision	BioWare	One of the best *Star Wars* games ever made
Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft	Tecmo	Damn tough, but a great example of style and gameplay
Project Gotham Racing 2	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations	As comprehensive an online racer as you're ever likely to find
Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	In-House	An enjoyable and solid psychic blasting romp
Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow	Ubisoft	In-House	An essential update to the hugely popular Live game
Rallisport Challenge 2	Microsoft	Digital Illusions	Does everything you'd want from a rally game and more
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	In-House	Even better than the original, with a storming Live mode
SSX 3	EA Sports	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos	Ion Storm	*Splinter Cell* for the Middle Ages? Sounds good to us…
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

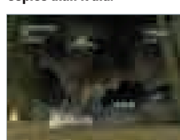
SC: Pandora Tomorrow

It's a shame that the online side of Ubisoft's stealth adventure has been overlooked – it's great fun.



Freedom Fighters

An interesting squad-based shoot-'em-up that should have sold more copies than it did.



Deus Ex: Invisible War

The mix of FPS and RPG might confuse some, but it makes for an absorbing and enjoyable adventure.



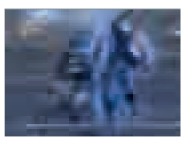
Project Zero

One of the scariest games we've ever had the pleasure of hiding behind the sofa for – not for the faint-hearted.



Ninja Gaiden

With the new downloads available, Tecmo's ninja adventure just became even more of an must-have game.



VIEWPOINT

RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW

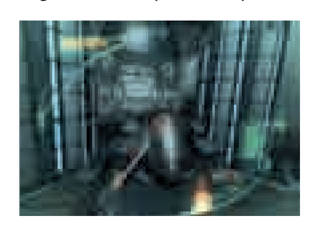
Not surprisingly, Ubisoft's 'cheap as chips' update of our favourite Xbox Live title has quickly become the most played game for us after hours. Needless to say, the team hasn't been getting very much sleep recently.



VIEWPOINT

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: BUTCHER BAY

It takes a lot to really impress us these days, so the fact that Starbreeze's take on Mr Diesel's character left us discussing it for ages means we have to doff our collective hat in respect. We're eager for the sequel already.



VIEWPOINT

SUDEKI

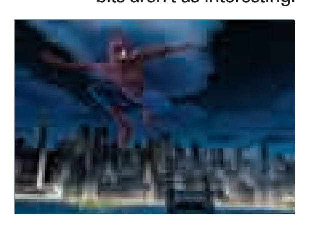
Climax's long-awaited RPG effort wasn't nearly as bad as we expected it to be, but even so, it should be enough to teach developers a valuable lesson. It seems that copying a genre that's so reliant on atmosphere and style isn't so easy after all…



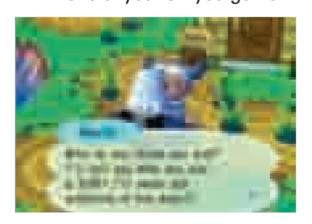
ESSENTIALS

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VIEWPOINT
SPIDER-MAN 2
Okay, so perhaps it's not the best ever example of a movie-to-game transfer, but that doesn't mean that Spidey's latest adventure is a letdown. Indeed, the *GTA* styling has done it the world of good. Shame the other bits aren't as interesting.



VIEWPOINT
ANIMAL CROSSING
Goodness gracious – the unthinkable has happened. Now that Nintendo's finally released this life-absorbing game in the UK, we expect every GameCube owner in the country to rush out and buy it. Yes, every one of you. Off you go now.

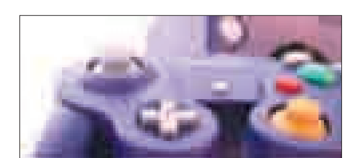


VIEWPOINT
MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR
With the GBA version of *Mario Golf* now available, we've had to return to the GameCube one to brush up on our skills, just so we can finally get everything unlocked. Looks like we're going to be here for a while…



GAMECUBE

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 3 May 2002 **MEDIA** 3-inch Optical Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £79.99



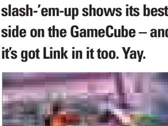
Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look. While third-party support is dwindling, it's the first-party releases that really offer some quality gaming. Nintendo still makes some of the finest games ever, so missing out isn't really an option.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Animal Crossing	Nintendo	In-House	The only game to keep us playing for a full year
Eternal Darkness	Nintendo	Silicon Knights	Scary in a different sense – very intriguing
F-Zero GX	Nintendo	Amusement Vision	Sega does it again with a brilliant retro remake
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	Ubisoft	Natsume	Highly absorbing – the *Animal Crossing* of farming games
Ikaruga	Treasure	In-House	Hard as nails and incredibly addictive
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	Camelot	Golfing fun without the need for Tiger Woods
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	Nintendo	In-House	Another great moment in gaming from Nintendo
Mario Party 5	Nintendo	In-House	Mini-game goodness, whether alone or with friends
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	Konami	Silicon Knights	Hardly innovative, but still a great game in its own right
Metroid Prime	Nintendo	In-House	A genre-redefining title in every sense
Resident Evil	Capcom	In-House	Still as scary as it was when it first came out
Soul Calibur II	Namco	In-House	The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay
Super Mario Sunshine	Nintendo	In-House	Not perfect, but still a very fine Mario adventure
Super Monkey Ball 2	Sega	Amusement Vision	Monkeys and balls – what more could you want?
Tales Of Symphonia IMPORT	Namco	In-House	An absolute beast of an RPG that will dominate your life
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	In-House	Looks great, plays even better
Wario Ware: Mega Party Game$	Nintendo	In-House	A party game that'll have you rolling in the aisles
Winning Eleven 6 IMPORT	Konami	In-House	The only essential football game for the GameCube
Zelda: Four Swords Adventures IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	The perfect excuse to have your friends round all the time
Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	In-House	One of the many reasons to own a GameCube

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

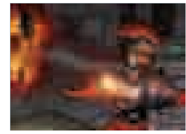
Soul Calibur II
Namco's sword-based slash-'em-up shows its best side on the GameCube – and it's got Link in it too. Yay.



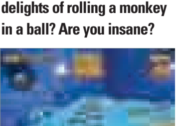
Viewtiful Joe
As lovely to look at as it is incredibly challenging – if the sequel's anything like this, we'll be very happy.



Eternal Darkness
Possibly the most under-rated game on the console. If you're looking for a real scare, this has it all.

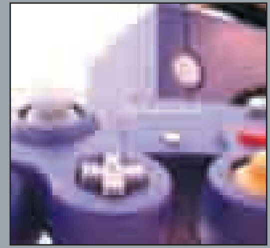


Super Monkey Ball 2
What do you mean, you haven't experienced the delights of rolling a monkey in a ball? Are you insane?



Resident Evil
The original, only better. It's not as subtle as *Eternal Darkness* on the scare front, but it's still a great game.






GBA

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 22 June 2001
MEDIA Flash Cartridge **CURRENT PRICE** £89.99



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely SP model is also available now in a variety of colours.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer
Advance Wars 2	Nintendo	In-House
Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand	Konami	In-House
Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow	Konami	In-House
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Nintendo	Square-Enix
Fire Emblem	Nintendo	In-House
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Camelot
Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town	Ubisoft	Natsume
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	Nintendo	AlphaDream
Mario Golf: Advance Tour	Nintendo	Camelot
Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	In-House
Medal Of Honor: Infiltrator	Electronic Arts	In-House
Metroid: Zero Mission	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Ruby / Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Shining Force: Resurrection Of The Dark Dragon	THQ	Sega
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubisoft	Crawfish
Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	In-House
Super Mario Advance 4: SMB 3	Nintendo	In-House
Wario Ware Inc: Mega Microgame$	Nintendo	In-House
Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords	Nintendo	In-House

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

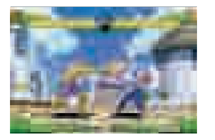
Fire Emblem
Another in a long line of life-draining strategy games to call the GBA home. Don't leave home without it.



Mario Golf: Advance Tour
The incredibly detailed foil to the GameCube game. If you've got one title, you need the other for link-up fun.



Street Fighter Alpha 3
Would you ever have thought that the GBA could recreate Capcom's fighting classic to a tee? Well, it can.



PC

MANUFACTURER N/A **UK LAUNCH DATE** N/A
MEDIA 4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £variable



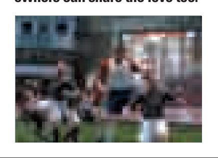
While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it's perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

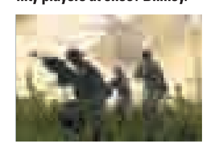
Title	Publisher	Developer
Battlefield Vietnam	EA	Digital Illusions
Call Of Duty	Activision	Infinity Ward
Championship Manager 03/04	Eidos	Sports Interactive
City Of Heroes	NCSoft	Cryptic Studios
Deus Ex	Eidos	Ion Storm
Far Cry	Ubisoft	Crytek
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
Grim Fandango	LucasArts	In-House
Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve Software
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Gathering	Illusion
Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising	Novalogic	In-House
Medieval: Total War	Activision	Creative Assembly
Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House
Rise Of Nations	Microsoft	Big Huge Games
Sam & Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts
Sensible World Of Soccer	Sensible Software	Renegade
The Sims	EA	Maxis
TRON 2.0	Buena Vista	Monolith
Unreal Tournament 2004	Atari	Epic Games

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

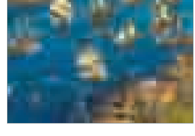
Pro Evolution Soccer 3
It's not just the PS2 that offers one of the best football games ever made – PC owners can share the love too.



Joint Ops: Typhoon Rising
As online multiplayer FPS games go, *Joint Ops* is one of the most fun. A hundred and fifty players at once? Blimey.



Rise Of Nations
Microsoft's efforts to conquer the RTS world have created a fine example of the genre. A real joy to play.



PERIPHERALS

THEY MAY NOT BE EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA, BUT EACH CONSOLE HAS ITS OWN MUST-HAVE PERIPHERALS – THOSE LITTLE EXTRAS THAT MAKE THE GAMING EXPERIENCE ALL THE MORE PLEASURABLE. CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THEM?

WIRELESS SHARP SHOOTER

Console: PlayStation2
From: Joytech
Price: £29.99
Available: Now



Give yourself a bit more freedom when the bullets start flying by playing with a wireless lightgun.

Anyone who plays lightgun games regularly (whether in the arcade or at home) will know that cables can be a real pain – they restrict your movement and can even get tangled up during the hectic action that most decent blasters offer. Unfortunately, there's no real way to solve that problem in the arcade, but for PS2 owners there is some light at the end of the tunnel. By combining its already proven Sharp Shooter lightgun design with the technology from its wireless controllers, Joytech has created a lightweight and versatile wireless lightgun with a 50-hour battery life (and two AA batteries included in the price), a sleep mode that saves power if you forget to turn it off and a shooting distance of five metres. With a built in D-pad, plus Auto Fire and Auto Reload modes, this is easily the best peripheral in its league.

WIRELESS PRECISION CONTROLLERS

Console: PlayStation2/Xbox
From: Logitech
Price: £29.99
Available: Now



What we've got here, see, is the marriage of form and function – it looks nice, it plays well.

Wireless controllers are becoming the norm with today's third-party peripheral developers. Not to be outdone by each other, gadget makers have ditched cables in favour of long battery life and how far away you can get before the signal fades; however, we still prefer a comfortable pad above both these issues. Thankfully, Logitech's evolution of its Precision Controller line has seen all three rolled neatly into a single package for both PS2 and Xbox. That you can be around 10 metres away from your PS2 without lag, and use the pad for over 50 hours straight on just two AA batteries, is certainly nice, but it's the curved shape and textured plastic coating (instead of that nasty faux rubber you usually see) that tip the scales for us. It's certainly a close call between these pads and those by Joytech, but that doesn't make Logitech's less desirable.

INSPIRE T7700 SPEAKERS



Console: PC
From: Creative
Price: £119.99
Available: Now

No, you're not seeing things – there really are that many speakers in Creative's current top-of-the-range set-up. As an example of 7.1 surround sound, the T7700 performs well above all other surround systems… even if the differences seem rather subtle at first. Featuring no less than seven satellite speakers and a subwoofer, the system not only takes advantage of the 7.1 capabilities offered by the current line of Creative Soundblaster cards, but can also up-mix 5.1 and 6.1 audio from other cards to a 7.1 level, dividing the channels even further to give that extra slice of spatial awareness. The effects may seem minimal, but wait until you actually try the system – with atmosphere-heavy titles such as *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* placing their faith in sound, the results are more than worth the investment. Well, as long as you've got room for all the speakers, of course.



AV CONTROL CENTRE

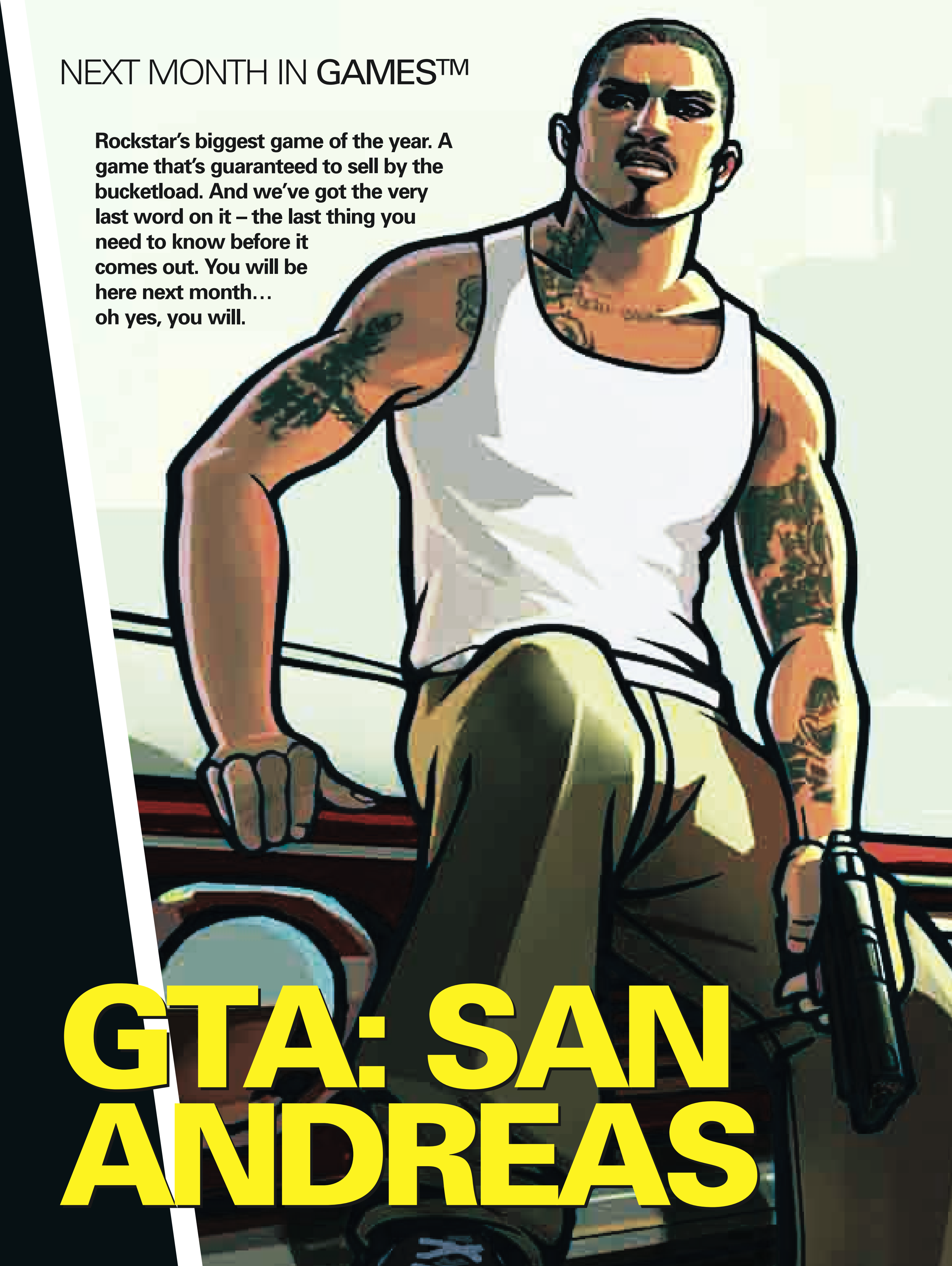


Console: N/A
From: Joytech
Price: £49.99
Available: Now

If you're like us, you'll know that switching between multiple consoles (particularly when you've got three SCART plugs and only one socket) can be a real pain in the proverbial. The answer is undoubtedly a switchbox of some kind, but finding a decent one that doesn't cost the earth isn't that easy – unless you happen to luck out in your local Argos, something (be it a lack of RGB support, a shortage of inputs or even, shock horror, no remote) is always bound to be wrong. However, Joytech's latest offering in its Universal Entertainment Equipment range is the answer to your prayers (if you pray about such things). With four SCART, S-Video and Composite inputs, as well as four Digital Optical inputs, it'll nicely house your main consoles and an additional device. And it looks rather smart compared to most switchbox devices, which makes the sub-£50 price tag seem like a real bargain to us.




eMag

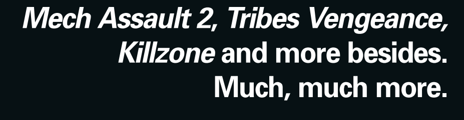

NEXT MONTH IN GAMES™
Rockstar's biggest game of the year. A game that's guaranteed to sell by the bucketload. And we've got the very last word on it – the last thing you need to know before it comes out. You will be here next month… oh yes, you will.
GTA: SAN ANDREAS

NEXT MONTH

180 PAGES OF GANGSTA TRIPPIN' GOODNESS

MORE… PREVIEWS

So, games for 2005 anyone? Thought you'd be interested… Check back in a month for details of the likes of *Metroid Prime 2, Destroy All Humans, Battlefield 2, Mech Assault 2, Tribes Vengeance, Killzone* and more besides. Much, much more.



MORE… REVIEWS

Hold onto your gaming hats – there are so many new titles in the offing it's a good job we've got 180 pages. From *Fable* to *OutRun 2, Evil Genius* to EA's 2005 sports games and *Star Wars: Battlefront.* And there'll be more, most likely also with numbers in the title.

MORE… FEATURES

games™ sits down and talks Ferraris with Makoto Osaki – the man who blessed the world with *OutRun 2*; goes undercover inside the the arcade industry to talk with the big names who are fighting to bring it back to its former glory; and as Tiger prepares its onslaught on the world of handheld gaming, we give the Gizmondo a test drive to see if it really has enough ability to have Nintendo and Sony shaking in their boots…

Please note: Due to circumstances beyond even our control, we can't guarantee that the next issue will actually contain all these things. But it will definitely have *something* in it. Probably words. And some pictures.

ON SALE 7 OCTOBER '04

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF games™

Enough of what we think, this is where you lot get to show off your rapier wit to praise, criticise or mock the games industry

I'M BEGINNING TO realise just what big business gaming is. It amazes me and yet it terrifies me too because where money flows the stony faced corporations flock. So now I think of the small gaming developers. They are the heart of gaming innovation but how can they ever compete if Mega Corporation starts building big studios to manufacture its games? The market seems set to head towards 'the bigger game' with its polished graphics and limited gameplay.

The big studios will be unable to try anything new and exciting for fear that it all goes terribly wrong and their huge budget is wasted. Business doesn't care about a good game – it cares about the cash. How many more *Enter The Matrix*'s will we have to suffer because gaming is shifted to exclusively target the casual gamer, the sucker for anything shiny with a movie licence stuck on it? I'm not denying that there will never again be a diamond of a game, I'm just saying it could be buried deep in a mass of substandard games. And if my pessimistic ranting does come true, I will mourn the loss of my favourite industry.

Huw Diprose

games™: Yeah, that's right. We can see a day when every developer is going to pump out substandard games for the fun of it, and people will buy them because they're that stupid… Take a look at our release list to see that there's no danger of this nightmare vision coming true. In the next six months, anyway.

HIDEO KOJIMA: WORLD-RENOWNED god of videogaming. This man is responsible for one of the greatest games in history, *Metal Gear Solid*, as well as its amazing yet inferior sequel. I am indebted to him but I must admit that he has seriously angered me. This isn't a rant about *MGS3*. Instead it is a complaint about his narrow-minded attitude.

In a recent interview Hideo was asked whether he'd consider developing for the Nintendo DS. One thing was made very clear: he stated that *MGS* wouldn't belong on the DS because the console was too orientated towards children.

For many years Nintendo has been criticised for targeting the younger gamer. This is an image that it's tried to shake, especially with brilliant titles like *Eternal Darkness*, *Resident Evil* and *Metroid Prime*, plus forthcoming sequels to *Zelda* and *Metroid*. Its case is not helped when one of the world's most respected and influential gaming figures denounces Nintendo's efforts. If certain developers are affiliated with companies then it is to be expected that they would want to dismiss other consoles, but for multiformat developers to ignore consoles due to their image is quite saddening.

This trend cannot be allowed to continue. Nintendo consoles are seen as kid's platforms so they need more adult titles. Developers won't make them because they think Nintendo consoles are for kids. It's a vicious circle.

There are other reasons why multiformat games don't appear on Nintendo consoles, but it is maddening that this happens. I hope that you'd agree that this has happened all too often and needs to be reversed!

Matthew Pellett

games™: We would assume that Kojima-san's rather busy working on *Metal Gear Solid 3* with one eye firmly cast in the direction of the

"**NINTENDO CONSOLES** ARE SEEN AS KID'S PLATFORMS SO THEY NEED MORE **ADULT TITLES**. DEVELOPERS WON'T MAKE THEM BECAUSE THEY THINK **NINTENDO CONSOLES ARE FOR KIDS**…"

Making Contact

There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:

games™, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS

However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the internet. Email us at this address: **gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who read **games™** will be able to get onto the site – and if you have bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **games™** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

Step One:
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

Step Two:
Type the following into the browser window: **www.totalgames.net**
You will arrive at the Totalgames website. From here click on the 'forum' icon. News users will have to register via the 'new user' icon – it's a simple step-by-step process which we're sure you can manage.

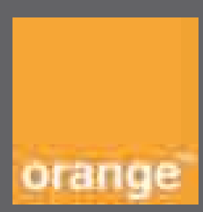
Step Three:
Once registered, simply email **gamestm@paragon.co.uk** with the password '**Methuselah**' and your username. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours. It says here.



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next generation of consoles. We reckon that's work enough for one man. Besides, in the same interview, Kojima-san said he'd love to develop something for the DS in future – something that really uses the dual screens and touch-screen capabililty – so he's not rubbishing the whole console, he just thinks that one of his franchises isn't best suited to the machine. So calm down, dear.

THE ONLY WAY I can think to start this letter is to congratulate and thank you for being the only magazine that has ever made me want to submit something in writing to its letters section. So why, after over 20 years of reading various gaming publications has **games™** coaxed me into putting finger to keyboard? It's quite simple really… an article in issue 21 entitled 'Goodbye To All That'.

I can in all honesty state that it is one of the most poignant and moving pieces of writing I have ever had the pleasure to read in any gaming publication. Talk about almost bringing a tear to the eye… That last sentence, "We've all gone and shot the food", basically said everything that could ever be said to a 30-something gamer like myself; and boy, did it hit a nerve, an awful hollow feeling of loss suddenly appearing in the pit of my stomach. And this is why I have the compulsion to write you.

Thoughtful, intelligent, unpretentious heartfelt writing – this is what we gamers need and this is what **games™** delivers. To anybody who is reading this magazine for the first time, trust me when I say you truly are reading a magazine written for gamers by people with an honest, unquestionable passion for all things games. Other magazines seem immature or, worse still, cold and standoffish. **games™** is different.

This magazine wants to be your mate. It wants to take you down the pub and talk about its passion 'til well past closing. It wants to take you home, sit with you on a comfy sofa, ply you with all your favourite drinks and munchies and enjoy playing games with you until you can play games no more. It wants you to know that there are others like you out there, others who genuinely love gaming and are in it for the long haul and wouldn't let it go for anything.

I must thank my good friend SK for introducing me to your magazine, thankfully from issue 1, and after reading every issue since, it has yet to disappoint. There is no purpose to this letter other than to express my honest thoughts and feelings. Yes, it may get lost within the mass of other praising letters I'm sure you receive every month, but praise should be given where it is due… life is far too short to hold back and not speak your mind. **games™** knows this. To those first-time readers, enjoy. To those of you who have been here since the beginning, I'm sure you know where I'm coming from. To all the staff at **games™**, well done, you deserve to be proud of yourselves.

Marc Shiels

games™: We don't normally print gushing letters, but we had such an overwhelming – and positive – response to the 'Goodbye To All That' article that we felt we ought to print a sample response. Thank you all for your kind words – the article's author has been given another biscuit and allowed an extra five minutes' playtime. And Marc, the cheque's in the post…

NO DOUBT YOU'LL get all manner of letters linked to the murder of Stefan Pakeerah, who, if you believe every tabloid newspaper, was killed as a direct result of 17-year-old Warren LeBlanc being obsessed with *Manhunt*.

I appreciate that whatever I write here is based purely upon my own opinion, but surely if the whole games industry comes under fire for a single incident – shocking or not – then I think that everyone who loves the industry deserves to have their opinion heard. I'm almost certain that this incident will stir up all

CONTACT

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Enough of what we think, this is where you lot get to show off your rapier wit to praise, criticise or mock the games industry

"THE PRESS IS DETERMINED TO **BLAME VIDEOGAMES** FOR THE ILLS OF SOCIETY, AND IT WILL DO SO AS LONG AS **IGNORANCE PREVAILS**"

manner of tabloid pun headlines aimed at scaring the hell out of parents and making them think that they're turning their children into murder-craving, mindless morons. The important word in that last sentence was 'children', as *Manhunt* has that special red '18' on the box which means that it is neither aimed at, nor should it be sold to, children.

I've no doubt that if LeBlanc had never seen *Manhunt* he wouldn't have committed such a terrible act in the same manner, but that still doesn't mean that it's the fault of Rockstar or even *Manhunt*. I feel that the blame should rest firmly on the shoulders of those who provided a child with the game in the first place. Of course, it could be argued that kids will always be able to get hold of games that are deemed unsuitable for them, but the same can be said of movies as well. Who's to say that LeBlanc wouldn't have smashed a guy's teeth in against a kerb if he'd seen *American History X*? Or beaten someone to death with a baseball bat after watching *Casino*?

Violent films have now become more widely accepted, so what's the difference between those and videogames? These days, just as many adults as children account for the sales of both films and games, and as the games industry has matured, so too has the content of its games. This is why Rockstar put an 18 certificate on *Manhunt*, because it knew it had created a game suitable only for adults, and it acted responsibly. Unfortunately, people with tunnel vision will attempt to ban *Manhunt* in spite of the fact that they have neither played this game nor appreciate videogames as a whole. The fact that newspapers have used this tragedy and its tenuous link with a videogame to sell newspapers probably won't occur to most people.

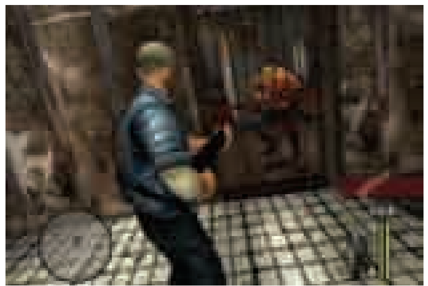
I guess we just have to accept that each and every time something like this happens – and there's no doubt this will happen again – the media will attempt to find a scapegoat. Unfortunately, with the press determined to blame videogames for the ills of society, it is likely that that scapegoat will inevitably be games for as long as ignorance prevails.

Colin Thompson

games™: There's no proof that videogames can influence or condition kids (a more thorough discussion of this can be found in our feature on page 88). However, we do find it depressing



Games like this will kill the games industry – but only if you ignore all the great titles that are headed our way.



The tabloids believe that games like this are responsible for driving someone to murder. You lot think otherwise.

Text Life

I think i may have missed something, what exactly does MMORPG Mean?
games™: Massively multiplayer online role-playing game. You can see why we abbreviate it.

May i compliment you on the finest cover to any magazine ever? Go on please… Fine. Have it your way…
games™: We thought that issue 22's cover wasn't too shoddy, so we'll let you throw praise our way. We also accept cash or gifts sent to the usual address.

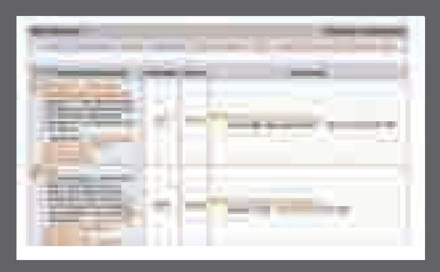
Bewar of the Brian Denehey! He's hiding just behind that small dog! Wait a minute… He's the dog too! He's coming out of the goddamn walls! Look…
…out, he has peas for blood and smells of socks!
games™: Are you sure you're not our ex-Retro Editor? He once saw the DVD owl…

I would love 2 change my career current career path 2 1 involved in Video Game Industry. Yet I have no specific qualifications 2 help. What should I do first?
games™: Qualifications are the key, we're sorry to say. Check out our guide to getting a job in the industry starting next issue.

can u help? i remember playin an old arcade game when i was a kid it had spiderman hawkeye an someone else on it but i cant remember wot its called. gr8 mag btw
games™: Um, that'll be *Spider-Man: The Videogame* by Sega.

Hi love da mag. Just wondering y u dont include a list of all of da games u have reviewed and wat issue it was in. Like a data burst. Ps luv da mag.
games™: If we did that it would take over the mag. We prefer to focus only the best games in our Essentials pages – surely there's more than enough there to keep you happy?





FROM THE FORUM

THE GREAT GAMING WITCH HUNT

Numpty
'*Manhunt* Blamed In Child Murder' – this was the headline story on the ITN news tonight. A boy was murdered and his mother is laying the blame at the door of *Manhunt*, calling for violent games to be banned. Nothing new there, but what did surprise me was how irresponsibly the report treated the matter. 'How can anyone justify the sale of such games?' they asked, then wheeled on a psychologist who stated that someone prone to unstable behaviour could have their perception of reality blurred through playing such games. With such sensationalist journalism fuelling the outrage of non-gamers, I can see pressure being brought to bear on developers and publishers alike to tone things down. *Manhunt* has an 18 rating, so clearly that's not enough to appease critics.

ApocalypseDude
This argument is so old it's ridiculous. The game has an 18 certificate, and it's much less violent than many films I've seen. It's all due to the media perception of games still being for kids, which they blatantly haven't been for about a decade now.

RenOfHeavens
I'd argue that a game like *Manhunt* deserves this kind of reporting, being a deeply irresponsible game itself. Think about it like this: can a game like *Manhunt* contribute anything positive to society? It's not an easy issue, and I'm against censorship, but I also think publishers should take some responsibility for not only the games they release, but how they promote them as well. Retailers need to start giving classifications more heed and parents need to be more aware of such ratings. I know loads of parents who wouldn't dream of letting their child see an 18-rated film but think nothing of letting them play *GTA*.

ApocalypseDude
I see it all the time at work. You do your utmost to warn a parent that the game is completely unsuitable for a child, but they just won't have it.

mallorn
We had this same discussion when *GTA III* was blamed for something. Popular entertainment is always blamed for the ills in society. When I was at school it was martial arts films, then it became video nasties. Much of this material, condemned at the time, has now been shown relatively uncensored on TV. I have no doubt some idiots are influenced by such things. Going back to my school days, whenever there was a fight the pair would always start with *Enter The Dragon* stances and moves, but after a few missed high kicks and rabbit chops they always resorted to the usual schoolboy flailing. The fight would have taken place anyway – all that had changed was the style. I have no reason to think this isn't just the same now.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

READING YOUR ARTICLES on piracy and the second-hand games market I was struck with a feasible solution to both of these problems: what if a system was set up where a percentage of the profit from second-hand game sales was invested in the prevention of piracy? This way publishers and retailers can gain from the sale of second-hand software. I don't think this would require any increase in the price of second-hand games, considering stores already put a hefty 300 per cent mark-up on second-hand items they buy.

I admit this isn't a perfect scenario, considering a large amount of piracy deals with PC software that has a virtually non-existent second-hand market, but considering the failings of most companies to provide a solid solution to piracy, it's a step in the right direction. I should also say that the increasing size of the second-hand market during this generation has drawn a user of pirate games on the PSone like myself away from this trend, finding games marginally more affordable now. There may well be better solutions than mine out there, but they'd better get to work or there'll be no games industry left to save.

Jason Coburn

games™: It's an interesting idea, but we can't see how this would ever work. Stores are unlikely to want to jut hand over the fruits of their business. And if they did, who would get the money, and how would it be spent? At the moment there are various groups fighting piracy – ELSPA, the police, trading standards – so a central fund would have to be set up to distribute the cash, or an entirely new group established. We'd like a scheme like this to work, but we just think it wouldn't. Sorry.



If you'd like to line your pockets with £100 of Gamestation vouchers then send us a games-related letter crammed with sparkling wit and pertinent points. Extra marks will be awarded for neat handwriting. Marks will be deducted for moaning about Nintendo.

that the red tops are all too keen to sell their newspapers with tawdry headlines attacking videogames and sensationalising a tragic event. Hopefully, with publishers acting responsibly, there's little chance of such headlines being more than a storm in a teacup.

AFTER GOING ALL misty-eyed reading your feature on Eighties coin-op arcade culture (issue 21), I was appalled that Glasgow, Ayr and their surroundings should be so bereft of public retro experiences. I should mention that down south we are a little more fortunate because there exist a smattering of active arcades in isolated areas on the south coast of England, particularly on the Isle of Wight.

In Ryde there are still a handful of places, seemingly unfazed by the past 20 years of gaming evolution, containing playable classic machines including *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids*, *Kung Fu Master*, *Enduro Racer*, *Ms. Pac-Ma*n, *Street Fighter II*, *OutRun*, *Mr. Do* and many more. Just to let gamers know that classic coin-op gaming has a little (bleep, bloop) breath left yet…

Ross Teagle

games™: While we know of a handful of trendy London bars and local arcades that are still keeping some of the classic games alive, it's still fair to say that the arcade as we knew it is rapidly becoming extinct. Perhaps we should compile a list of arcades that are still active and print them in our retro section – that way, those of you still seeking a little 'bleep, bloop' action will know where to go. If you know of the best place for hot retro action, let us know.

"Thank you for your co-operation"



